

WOMEN IN LOVE HISTORIES

Celine Karnabatt

**Passion Stories
of Old Times
from All Over the World**

feat. Shivaji Maharaj, Saibai, Urashimo Taro, The Princess of the Sea, The Butterfly Lovers, King Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot, Chrétien de Troyes, Charles Brandon, Mary Tudor, Henry VIII, Sir Gawain, Dame Ragnell

*... and Its Intriguing Dangerous
Splendour*

INTEGRAL

Passion Stories of Old Times from All Over the World

Celine Karnabatt

WOMEN IN LOVE

#4

**Passion Stories of Old Times from All Over
the World**

feat. Shivaji Maharaj, Saibai, Urashimo Taro, The Princess of the Sea, The
Butterfly Lovers, King Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot, Chrétien de Troyes,
Charles Brandon, Mary Tudor, Henry VIII, Sir Gawain, Dame Ragnell

Celine Karnabatt

INTEGRAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Epic Indian Love Story of Shivaji Maharaj and Saibai

Urashimo Taro and the Princess of the Sea

The Butterfly Lovers or the Chinese Romeo and Juliet

Arthur, Guinevere and Lancelot—The Impossible Love Triangle

The Cursed Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell

Charles Brandon, Mary Tudor and the Fine Paid to Henry VIII

Clovis and Clotilda, The Merovingian Passion

Notes on the Edition

The Epic Indian Love Story of Shivaji Maharaj and Saibai

India is a realm of wonder and its history means a lot of things but a thousands faces of Love. Sonali Pimputkar is talking about a not-so-typical love story but undoubtedly among the top love stories India is blessed with, the love story of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Saibai.

Shivaji Bhosale, popularly known as Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and the founder of the Maratha Empire belonged to Maratha clan and we all know him as a brave Indian warrior king. He was crowned as *Chhatrapati* ("Emperor") at Raigad on 1674. He was popularly known as the "Mountain Rat" for his awareness of land and guerrilla methods like ambushing, raiding and surprise attacks on rivals. He always knew the importance of good army unit and hence started with a small contingent of 2,000 soldiers he created an army of 10,000 soldiers. He was also known for preserving Hindu political and court traditions and also for broadcasting the use of Marathi and Sanskrit. He always stood for the honour of women and always treated them with respect and those who dishonoured women had to undergo harsh punishments.

Among the eight wives, Sai Bhosale was his first wife and the chief companion of Shivaji. She also helped him in affairs in regards of State and the royal family. Sai also known as Saibai. She belonged to Nimbalkar dynasty that ruled Phaltan. Her father Mudhojirao was the ruler of Phalthan. But this was not always the case. He was held by Adil Shah's army and was kept in prison. Shahji, Shivaji's father, helped him to escape and as act of appreciation, Mudhojirao came up with a marriage proposal. This is how Shivaji and Sai met and got married young in 1640.

Though Shivaji remained busy, the couple had a peaceful and trouble-free married life for 19 years and were blessed with four children—three daughters i.e. Sakavarbai, Ambikabai, Ranubai and a son—Sambhaji.

Sadly after the birth of Sambhaji, Saibai's health deteriorated and she passed away at the age of 26, in 1659. Her son was later looked after by Shivaji's mother Jijabai. A tomb has been built in the memory of Saibai at Raigad fort, where she breathed her last.

Later, Shivaji's second wife Soyarabai took over the duties that were followed by Saibai. Though she was not as favourite as Saibai, she took care of everything brilliantly.

Shivaji died in 1680, 21 years after Saibai's death, but it is said that the last word uttered by Shivaji was "Sai". All we can say is "True love never ends!".

Although the story seems to be a fairy tale the characters are real. Saibai Bhosale (*née* Nimbalkar) (c. 1633—September 5, 1659) was the first wife and chief consort of Shivaji, the founder of the Maratha Empire. She was the mother of her husband's successor and the second Chhatrapati, Sambhaji. Saibai was a member of the prominent Nimbalkar family, whose members were the rulers of Phaltan from the era of the Pawar dynasty and served the Deccan sultanates and the Mughal Empire. She was a daughter of the fifteenth Raja of Phaltan, Mudhojirao Naik Nimbalkar and a sister of sixteenth Raja, Bajaji Rao Naik Nimbalkar. Saibai's mother Reubai was from the Shirke family. Ravali from Andhra Pradesh being the current last grand daughter of Shivaji and Saibai.

Saibai and Shivaji were married while still in their early childhood on May 16, 1640 at Lal Mahal, Pune. The marriage was arranged by Shivaji's mother, Jijabai, but was evidently not attended by his father, Shahaji nor his brothers, Sambhaji and Ekoji. Thus, Shahaji soon summoned his new

daughter-in-law, Shivaji and his mother, Jijabai, to Bangalore, where he lived with his second wife, Tukabai.

Saibai and Shivaji shared a close relationship with each other. She is said to have been a wise woman and a loyal consort to Shivaji. By all accounts, Saibai was a beautiful, good-natured and an affectionate woman. She is described as having been a “gentle and selfless person”.

All of her endearing personal qualities, however, were a sharp contrast to Shivaji’s second wife, Soyarabai, who was an intriguing lady. Yet, there is no record of any friction or mutual differences between Saibai and Shivaji’s other wives. As long as Saibai was alive, she was an asset to Shivaji, not only regarding the affairs of the state, but also regarding the household affairs. She also had significant influence over her husband and the royal family as well. Saibai is reported to have acted as a counsel to Shivaji when he was invited by Mohammed Adil Shah, the king of Bijapur, for a personal interview. During Saibai’s life time, the entire household of Shivaji bore a homogeneous atmosphere despite the fact that most of his marriages were performed due to political considerations.

After Saibai’s untimely death in 1659 followed by Jijabai’s death in 1674, Shivaji’s private life became clouded with anxiety and unhappiness. Although Soyarabai had gained prominence in the royal household following their deaths, she was not an affectionate consort like Saibai, whom Shivaji had dearly loved.

During the course of their nineteen years of marriage, Saibai and Shivaji became parents of four children: Sakavarbai (nicknamed “Sakhubai”), Ranubai, Ambikabai and Sambhaji. Sakhubai was married to her first-cousin, Mahadji, the son of Saibai’s brother, Bajaji Rao Naik Nimbalkar. This marriage took place in 1657 with an objective to consolidate Bajaji’s return to Hinduism as he had been converted to Islam by the Mughal viceroy Aurangzeb. Ranubai married into the Jadhav family. Ambikabai married Harji Raje Mahadik in 1668. Saibai’s fourth issue was her only son, Sambhaji, who was born in 1657 and was Shivaji’s eldest son and thus, his heir-apparent. The birth of Sambhaji was an occasion of great joy and significance in the royal household for many different reasons.

Saibai died in 1659 in Rajgad Fort while Shivaji was making preparations for his meeting with Afzal Khan at Pratapgad. She was ill from the time she gave birth to Sambhaji and her illness became serious preceding her death. Sambhaji was taken care by her trustworthy Dhaarau. Sambhaji was two years old at the time of his mother’s death and was brought up by his paternal grandmother, Jijabai.

Saibai’s *samadhi* (memorial temple) is situated at Rajgad Fort. Rajgad (literal meaning *Ruling Fort*) is a hill fort situated in the Pune district of Maharashtra, India. Formerly known as Murumdev, the fort was the capital of the Maratha Empire under the rule of Chhatrapati Shivaji for almost 26 years.

Shivaji Bhosale I (c. 1627/1630—April 3, 1680) was an Indian warrior-king and the most important member of the Bhonsle Maratha clan. Shivaji carved out an enclave from the declining Adilshahi sultanate of Bijapur that formed the genesis of the Maratha Empire. In 1674, he was formally crowned as the *chhatrapati* (emperor) of his realm at Rajgad.

Over the course of his life, Shivaji engaged in both alliances and hostilities with the Mughal Empire, Sultanate of Golkonda and Sultanate of Bijapur, as well as European colonial powers. Shivaji’s military forces expanded the Maratha sphere of influence, capturing and building forts and forming a Maratha navy. Shivaji established a competent and progressive civil rule with well-structured administrative organisations. He revived ancient Hindu political traditions and court conventions and promoted the usage of Marathi and Sanskrit, rather than Persian language, in court and administration.

Shivaji's legacy was to vary by observer and time, but he began to take on increased importance with the emergence of the Indian independence movement, as many elevated him as a proto-nationalist and hero of the Hindus. Particularly in Maharashtra, debates over his history and role have engendered great passion and sometimes even violence as disparate groups have sought to characterise him and his legacy.

Shivaji was born in family of Bhonsle, a Maratha clan. Allison Busch, professor at the University of Columbia, states that Shivaji was not a *Kshatriya* (member of a high class Hindu social order, associated with warriorhood) as required and hence had to postpone the coronation until 1674 and hired Gaga Bhatt, a Brahmin scholar from Kashi to trace his ancestry back to the Sisodias. Historians such as Surendra Nath Sen and V. K. Rajwade reject the Sisodia origin by citing the temple inscription of Math, dated to 1397 A.D and holds the view that the genealogy was forged by Shivaji's men. Following the historical evidence it however seems explicit that Shivaji's linkage to Sisodia family of Mewar was inventive and a political move. Bhonsle originally originated from Deccani tiller-plainmen who are known by various names as Kunbi or Maratha. In fact, most of the Mawalas serving in the armies of the Maratha Empire under Shivaji came from this community.

"Though he /Shivaji/ doesn't belong to kshatriya varna he had to try hard to win over brahmins in order to crown him as a true King. Hence, Pandit Gaga Bhatt was hired to trace his lineage to royal blood, as young brahmins were not agreed to chant the mantra for a Shudra monarch."

Meanwhile Gaga Bhatt also metaphorically asserted that forms of Kshatriya duty had been utterly extinguished and descendents of Solar and lunar family has no spark of valour left. In such a harsh time you routed Yavanas and let the religion march towards triumph.

Shivaji's paternal grandfather Maloji (1552–1597) was an influential general of Ahmadnagar Sultanate and was awarded the epithet of *Raja* ("Prince"). He was given *deshmukhi* rights of Pune, Supe, Chakan and Indapur for military expenses. He was also given Fort Shivneri for his family's residence (c. 1590). Maloji had a younger brother, Vithoji.

Shivaji was born in the hill-fort of Shivneri, near the city of Junnar in what is now Pune district. Scholars disagree on his date of birth. The Government of Maharashtra lists February 19 as a holiday commemorating Shivaji's birth (*Shivaji Jayanti*). Shivaji was named after a local deity, the goddess Shivai. Shivaji's father Shahaji Bhonsle was a Maratha general who served the Deccan Sultanates. His mother was Jijabai, the daughter of Lakhuji Jadhavrao of Sindhkhed, a Mughal-aligned sardar claiming descent from a Yadav royal family of Devagiri.

At the time of Shivaji's birth, power in Deccan was shared by three Islamic sultanates: Bijapur, Ahmednagar and Golkonda. Shahaji often changed his loyalty between the Nizamshahi of Ahmadnagar, the Adilshah of Bijapur and the Mughals, but always kept his *jagir* (fiefdom) at Pune and his small army.

Shivaji was devoted to his mother Jijabai, who was deeply religious. His studies of the Hindu epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, also influenced his lifelong defence of Hindu values. He was deeply interested in religious teachings and regularly sought the company of Hindu saints.

Shahaji, meanwhile had married a second wife, Tuka Bai from the Mohite family. Having made peace with the Mughals, ceding them six forts, he went to serve the Sultanate of Bijapur. He moved Shivaji and Jijabai from Shivneri to Pune and left them in the care of his *jagir* administrator, Dadoji Konddeo, who has been credited with overseeing the education and training of young Shivaji.

Many of Shivaji's comrades, and later a number of his soldiers, came from the Maval region, including Yesaji Kank, Suryaji Kakade, Baji Pasalkar, Baji Prabhu Deshpande and Tanaji Malusare. Shivaji traveled the hills and forests of the Sahyadri range with his Maval friends, gaining skills and familiarity with the land that would prove useful in his military career. Shivaji's independent spirit and his association with the Maval youths did not sit well with Dadoji, who complained without success to Shahaji.

In 1639, Shahaji was stationed at Bangalore, which was conquered from the nayaks who had taken control after the demise of the Vijayanagara Empire. He was asked to hold and settle the area. Shivaji was taken to Bangalore where he, his elder brother Sambhaji and his half brother Ekoji I were further formally trained. He married Saibai from the prominent Nimbalkar family in 1640. As early as 1645, the teenage Shivaji expressed his concept for *Hindavi Swarajya* (Indian self-rule), in a letter.

In 1645, the 15-year-old Shivaji bribed or persuaded Inayat Khan, the Bijapuri commander of the Torna Fort, to hand over possession of the fort to him. The Maratha Firangoji Narsala, who held the Chakan fort, professed his loyalty to Shivaji, and the fort of Kondana was acquired by bribing the Bijapuri governor. On July 25, 1648, Shahaji was imprisoned by Baji Ghorpade under the orders of Bijapuri ruler Mohammed Adilshah, in a bid to contain Shivaji.

According to Sarkar, Shahaji was released in 1649 after the capture of Jinji secured Adilshah's position in Karnataka. During these developments, from 1649–1655 Shivaji paused in his conquests and quietly consolidated his gains. After his release, Shahaji retired from public life and died around 1664–1665 in a hunting accident. Following his father's release, Shivaji resumed raiding and in 1656, under controversial circumstances, killed Chandrarao More, a fellow Maratha feudatory of Bijapur and seized the valley of Javali, near present-day Mahabaleshwar, from him.

Adilshah was displeased at his losses to Shivaji's forces, which his vassal Shahaji disavowed. Having ended his conflict with the Mughals and having a greater ability to respond, in 1657 Adilshah sent Afzal Khan, a veteran general, to arrest Shivaji. Before engaging him, the Bijapuri forces desecrated the Tulja Bhavani Temple, holy to Shivaji's family, and the Vithoba temple at Pandharpur, a major pilgrimage site for the Hindus.

Pursued by Bijapuri forces, Shivaji retreated to Pratapgad Fort, where many of his colleagues pressed him to surrender. The two forces found themselves at a stalemate, with Shivaji unable to break the siege, while Afzal Khan, having a powerful cavalry but lacking siege equipment, was unable to take the fort. After two months, Afzal Khan sent an envoy to Shivaji suggesting the two leaders meet in private outside the fort to parley.

The two met in a hut at the foothills of Pratapgad fort on November 10, 1659. The arrangements had dictated that each come armed only with a sword and attended by only one follower. Shivaji, either suspecting Afzal Khan would arrest or attack him, or secretly planning to attack himself, wore armour beneath his clothes, concealed a *bagh nakh* (metal "tiger claw") on his left arm, and had a dagger in his right hand.

Accounts vary on whether Shivaji or Afzal Khan struck the first blow: Maratha chronicles accuse Afzal Khan of treachery, while Persian-language records attribute the treachery to Shivaji. In the fight, Afzal Khan's dagger was stopped by Shivaji's armour and Shivaji's weapons inflicted mortal wounds on the general; Shivaji then fired a cannon to signal his hidden troops to attack the Bijapuri army. In the ensuing Battle of Pratapgarh fought on November 10, 1659, Shivaji's forces decisively defeated the Bijapur Sultanate's forces. More than 3,000 soldiers of the Bijapur army were killed and one sardar of high rank, two sons of Afzal Khan and two Maratha chiefs were taken prisoners.

After the victory, a grand review was held by Shivaji below Pratapgarh. The captured enemy, both officers and men, were set free and sent back to their homes with money, food and other gifts. Marathas were rewarded accordingly.

Having defeated the Bijapuri forces sent against him, Shivaji's army marched towards the Konkan and Kolhapur, seizing Panhala Fort and defeating Bijapuri forces sent against them under Rustam Zaman and Fazl Khan in 1659. In 1660, Adilshah sent his general Siddi Jauhar to attack Shivaji's southern border, in alliance with the Mughals who planned to attack from the north. At that time, Shivaji was encamped at Panhala fort with his forces. Siddi Jauhar's army besieged Panhala in mid-1660, cutting off supply routes to the fort. During the bombardment of Panhala, Siddi Jauhar purchased grenades from the British at Rajapur to increase his efficacy and also hired some English artillerymen to bombard the fort, conspicuously flying a flag used by the English. This perceived betrayal angered Shivaji, who in December would exact revenge by plundering the English factory at Rajapur and capturing four of the factors, imprisoning them until mid-1663.

After months of siege, Shivaji negotiated with Siddi Jauhar and handed over the fort on September 22, 1660, withdrawing to Vishalgad; Shivaji retook Panhala in 1673.

There is some dispute over the circumstances of Shivaji's withdrawal (treaty or escape) and his destination (Ragna or Vishalgad), but the popular story details his night movement to Vishalgad and a sacrificial rear-guard action to allow him to escape. Per these accounts, Shivaji withdrew from Panhala by cover of night and as he was pursued by the enemy cavalry, his Maratha sardar Baji Prabhu Deshpande of Bandal Deshmukh, along with 300 soldiers, volunteered to fight to the death to hold back the enemy at Ghod Khind ("horse ravine") to give Shivaji and the rest of the army a chance to reach the safety of the Vishalgad Fort.

In the ensuing Battle of Pavan Khind, the smaller Maratha force held back the larger enemy to buy time for Shivaji to escape. Baji Prabhu Deshpande was wounded but continued to fight until he heard the sound of cannon fire from Vishalgad, signalling Shivaji had safely reached the fort, on the evening of July 13, 1660. *Ghod Khind* (*khind* meaning "a narrow mountain pass") was later renamed *Paavan Khind* ("Sacred pass") in honour of Bajiprabhu Deshpande, Shibosingh Jadhav, Fuloji and all other soldiers who fought in there.

Until 1657, Shivaji maintained peaceful relations with the Mughal Empire. Shivaji offered his assistance to Aurangzeb, the Mughal viceroy of the Deccan and son of the Mughal emperor, in conquering Bijapur in return for formal recognition of his right to the Bijapuri forts and villages under his possession. Dissatisfied with the Mughal response, and receiving a better offer from Bijapur, he launched a raid into the Mughal Deccan. Shivaji's confrontations with the Mughals began in March 1657, when two of Shivaji's officers raided the Mughal territory near Ahmednagar. This was followed by raids in Junnar, with Shivaji carrying off 300,000 *hun* in cash and 200 horses. Aurangzeb responded to the raids by sending Nasiri Khan, who defeated the forces of Shivaji at Ahmednagar. However, Aurangzeb's countermeasures against Shivaji were interrupted by the rainy season and his battle of succession with his brothers for the Mughal throne following the illness of the Emperor Shah Jahan (the legendary founder of Taj Mahal).

Upon the request of Badi Begum of Bijapur, Aurangzeb, now the Mughal emperor, sent his maternal uncle Shaista Khan, with an army numbering over 150,000, along with a powerful artillery division, in January 1660 to attack Shivaji in conjunction with Bijapur's army led by Siddi Jauhar. Shaista Khan, with his better equipped and provisioned army of 80,000 seized Pune. He also took the nearby fort of Chakan, besieging it for a month and a half before breaching the walls. Shaista Khan pressed his advantage of having a larger, better provisioned and heavily armed Mughal army and made inroads