



Iconic Sword of Raghuji Bhosale I

Why in News?

The **Maharashtra government** has successfully reclaimed the **iconic sword** of legendary **Maratha warrior Raghuji Bhosale I**, at an auction conducted by Sotheby's in London.



Key Points

- **Historic Achievement by Maharashtra:**
 - The reclaimed item is the **18th-century sword of Raghuji Bhosale I**, a legendary **Maratha general and founder of the Nagpur-based Bhosale dynasty**.
 - Raje Mudhoji Bhosale of the **Nagpur royal family welcomed the move** and praised the timely intervention of both state and central authorities.
 - Officials confirmed that the sword will soon return to India and is expected to be **displayed in a museum or heritage centre**.
- **Legacy of Raghuji Bhosale I:**
 - Raghuji Bhosale I (1695–1755) served as a **prominent general under Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj**.
 - He **earned the title 'Senasaheb Subha'** for his military prowess.
 - He **led major campaigns in Bengal (1745 and 1755)**, expanding Maratha control into Bengal and Odisha.
 - Raghuji also **extended his influence into Chanda, Chhattisgarh, and Sambalpur**.
 - His **victories in South India**, including over the Nawabs of Kurnool and Cuddapah, helped solidify Maratha dominance.
- **Historical and Artistic Value of the Sword:**
 - The reclaimed sword is an example of the **'firangi' style** — featuring a straight, European blade combined with a locally crafted Mulheri hilt.
 - The hilt is intricately decorated with **koftgiri gold inlay and wrapped in green cloth**.

- An **inscription** in Devanagari reads: “**Shrimant Raghoji Bhosale Senasaheb Subha Firang**”, suggesting the sword belonged to or was custom-made for Raghuji Bhosale.
- The European blade bears a manufacturer’s mark, highlighting the global arms trade and Indo-European fusion of the 18th century.
- **Possible Historical Origins of the Sword:**
 - Experts speculate the sword may have been part of the loot seized by the **British after the 1817 Battle of Sitabuldi**, where the East India Company defeated the Nagpur Bhosales.
 - It may also have been gifted to the British in the aftermath of the battle.

Nagpur Bhosales

- The Nagpur branch of the **Bhonsle dynasty** was **established by Raghoji Bhonsle I in the early 18th century**.
- Under Raghoji’s leadership, Maratha influence spread across central and eastern India, including parts of modern-day **Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha**.
- The Nagpur Bhonsles **identified themselves as Kshatriyas** and traced their ancestry to the **Sisodia Rajputs of Udaipur**, highlighting their royal heritage.
- The family earned the title "Hinganikar" because an ancestor—likely a contemporary of **Maloji Bhonsle (grandfather of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj)**—rehabilitated the village of Beradi near Hingani in present-day Pune.
- The Nagpur Bhonsles ruled over a **region rich in iron and copper**, materials that were expertly used to produce both everyday tools and high-quality weaponry.
- The weapons manufactured under the Bhonsles were celebrated for their superior **craftsmanship, artistry, and functional design**—reflecting a blend of martial skill and aesthetic excellence.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/iconic-sword-of-raghuji-bhosale-i>