

### 3. Maratha Sardars - The Famous House of the Bhonsales

**Period of Unrest :** As the saints preached devotion to God, the brave Maratha Sardars started a tradition of bravery.

This was a period of great unrest. The two Sultans, the Adilshah of Bijapur and the Nizamshah of Ahmadnagar were constantly at war with each other. They made use of the armies of Maratha Sardars in these wars.

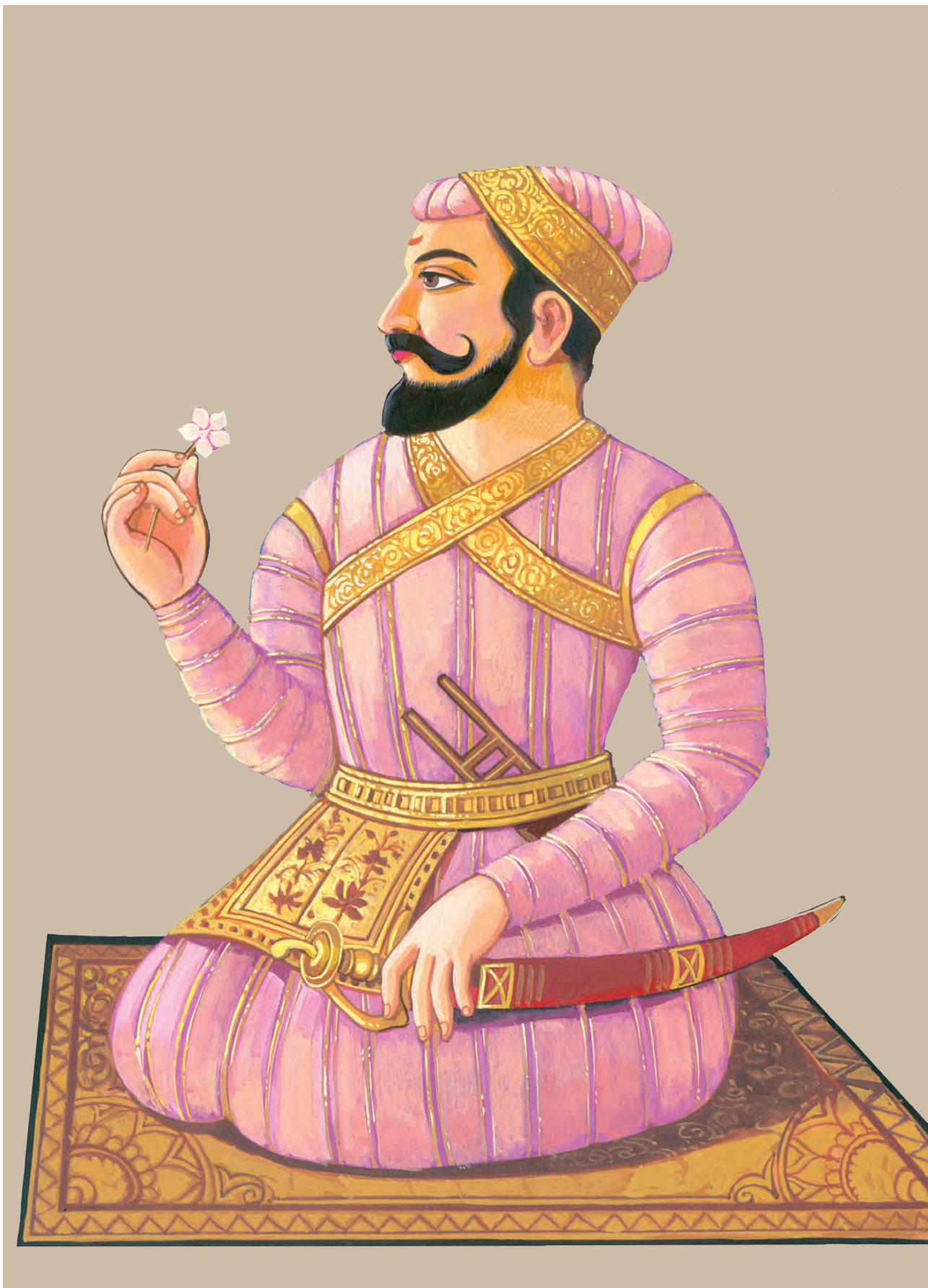
**The Brave Maratha Sardars :** The Marathas were both brave and tough. They were also fearless and loyal to their masters. They were very proud of their achievements on the battlefield. The brave Maratha soldier with a spear in hand and a sword at the side would ride in his Sardar's cavalry. All the Maratha Sardars had their own private armies. If such a Sardar went to the Sultan with his army, the Sultan gave him employment, made him a Sardar of his kingdom and sometimes conferred a Jagir upon him. The Sardar who received such a Jagir considered himself a Raja.

There were many famous Maratha Sardars at the Courts of Ahmadnagar and Bijapur. The more famous among them were the Jadhavs of Sindkhed, Nimbalkars of Phaltan, Ghorpades of Mudhol, Moreys of Javali, Bhonsales of Verul. The Sindkhed Jadhavs were descendants of the Yadavs of Devgiri. Jijabai, the mother of Shivaji Maharaj was the daughter of Lakhujirao Jadhav of Sindkhed.

**Tradition of Valour :** All these Sardars were brave but many of them were sworn enemies of one another. They never thought that they should unite and do something for their own people. So all their valour and bravery served the interests of others. Even so, they kept alive the warlike spirit, especially among the young. Many famous soldiers were born in their families who kept alive the tradition of valour. Among the famous families, the Bhonsales of Verul showed great bravery and enterprise.

**The Temple of Ghrushneshwar :** It was about four hundred years ago. The temple of Ghrushneshwar near the Verul caves was falling to pieces. The walls had developed cracks. The priest also had deserted the temple. Thus the temple which was built in honour of a great god was totally neglected. All the devotees who came there mourned over the sorry state of the temple, but no one thought of repairing it.

A great devotee of Shiva visited the temple regularly. He would put flowers and 'bel' on the 'lingam' and express his innermost thoughts to the God. He carried out extensive repairs to the temple and restored it to its original condition. He also made arrangements for the proper maintenance of the temple. Now there were lights both inside and outside the temple and the lost grandeur of Ghrushneshwar was restored. Who was this devotee who did all this? He was Maloji Raje Bhonsale.



Shahaji Raje

**The Bhonsales of Verul :** Maloji Raje Bhonsale, the Patil of Verul, was a great devotee of Shiva. Babaji Raje had two sons. Maloji Raje was the elder, and Vithoji Raje the younger. Babaji Raje Bhonsale had the rights of a Patil in the Verul village.

Maloji Raje and Vithoji Raje were both brave and enterprising. They had in their service many armed Maratha troops. It was a period of great unrest. The Moghul Emperor from Delhi had attacked the Kingdom of Nizamshah. Daulatabad was then the capital of Nizamshah. Malik Amber was his Vazir or Chief Minister. Malik Amber was able and wise. The two capable and brave brothers from Verul soon caught his attention. On his recommendation, the Shah conferred on Maloji Raje the Jagir of Pune and Supe Parganas.

So the Bhonsales became rich and powerful. Maloji Raje's wife was Umabai. She came from the House of the Nimbalkars of Phaltan. They had two sons, Shahaji and Sharifji. Maloji Raje was killed in a battle at Indapur. At that time Shahaji was only five years old. Then Vithoji Raje looked after the children and the Jagir. Later, he asked in marriage for Shahaji, the daughter of Lakhujirao Jadhav. Jijabai, the daughter of Lakhujirao, was well favoured by the gods. Lakhujirao accepted Vithoji Raje's proposal. Lakhujirao was a brave and valiant Sardar in the court of Nizamshah. He kept a large army of his own. He commanded great respect and honour at the court of Nizamshah. He celebrated the wedding of Shahaji Raje and Jijabai with

great pomp. Jijabai became the Fortune of the Bhonsale family.

**Shahaji Raje :** Nizamshah transferred to Shahaji Raje the Jagir he had conferred on Maloji Raje. Shahaji Raje was a brave and capable man held in great respect at the court of Nizamshah. The Moghul Emperor decided to conquer the Kingdom of Nizamshah. For this, he made an alliance with the Adilshah of Bijapur. Malik Amber and Shahaji Raje fought bravely to save Nizamshahi. They defeated both the armies. This battle took place at Bhatawadi near Ahmadnagar. Sharifji was killed in the battle. Shahaji Raje displayed great valour. He was praised everywhere as a brave General. His reputation in the court was so enhanced that even Malik Amber began to feel jealous of him. This gradually led to antagonism between them. As a result, Shahaji Raje left Nizamshahi and joined the court of Adilshah at Bijapur. Adilshah honoured him with the title of 'Sar Lashkar' (Chief of Army). Later, there were many developments in Nizamshahi. The Vazir Malik Amber died. His scheming son Fattekhan became the Vazir of Nizamshahi. During his period, the Nizamshahi began to decline. At about the same time, there was a threat of Moghul aggression. So, Nizamshah's mother appealed to Shahaji Raje to return to Nizamshahi and save it. Therefore, Shahaji Raje left Adilshahi and returned to Nizamshahi.

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**1. Fill in the blanks choosing the correct option.**

- (a) Among the famous families, the ..... of Verul showed great bravery and enterprise.  
(Moreys, Ghorpades, Bhonsales)
- (b) Babaji Raje Bhonsale had two sons, Maloji and .....  
(Vithoji, Shahaji, Sharifji)
- (c) ..... was a capable Vazir of Nizamshah.  
(Malik Amber, Fattekhani, Sharifji)

**2. Write the relation between :**

- (a) Maloji Raje - Vithoji Raje .....
- (b) Shahaji Raje - Lakhujirao Jadhav .....
- (c) Shahaji Raje - Sharifji .....
- (d) Babaji Raje - Vithoji Raje .....

**3. Match the pairs.**

- | ‘A’          | ‘B’           |
|--------------|---------------|
| (a) Sindkhed | (1) Nimbalkar |
| (b) Phaltan  | (2) Ghorpade  |
| (c) Javali   | (3) Bhonsale  |
| (d) Mudhol   | (4) Morey     |
|              | (5) Jadhav    |

**4. Give the answer in one sentence.**

- (a) Who restored the temple of Ghrushneshwar to its original condition ?
- (b) Which Jagir was bestowed upon Maloji Raje by Nizamshah ?
- (c) Who fought bravely to save Nizamshahi ?
- (d) With what title did the Adilshah honour Shahaji Raje ?
- (e) Why did Shahaji Raje leave Adilshahi and return to Nizamshahi ?

**Activity**

Locate places like Ahmadnagar, Phaltan, Verul, Supe, Pune in the map of Maharashtra.

**Note :** The word ‘Maratha’ here does not mean the ‘specific caste of an individual’. It means ‘Marathi Speaking People’ or ‘Maharashtrians’.

