



Maharaja Ranjit Singh

A statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who ruled Punjab for almost four decades (1801-39), was inaugurated in **Lahore** on the occasion of 180th death anniversary of the legendary Sikh ruler.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh

- He was born on November 13, 1780 in **Gujranwala**, now in **Pakistan**.
- At that time, Punjab was ruled by powerful chieftains who had divided the territory into Misls (refers to the sovereign states of the **Sikh Confederacy**, that rose during the 18th century in the Punjab region in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent after the collapse of the Mughal Empire).
 - Ranjit Singh overthrew the warring Misls and established a **unified Sikh empire**.
- He was given the title **Lion of Punjab** (Sher-e-Punjab) for his success in freeing Lahore (his capital) from the Afghan invaders.

Modernization of Army

- He combined the strong points of the **traditional Khalsa army** with western advances in warfare to raise **Asia's most powerful indigenous army** of that time.
- He also employed a large number of **European officers**, especially French, to train his troops.
- He appointed French General **Jean Franquis Allard** to modernize his army.

Wide Empire

- Ranjit Singh's **trans-regional empire** (spread over several states) included the former Mughal provinces of Lahore and Multan besides part of Kabul and the entire Peshawar.
- The boundaries of his state went up to **Ladakh** — in the northeast, **Khyber pass** (route the foreign rulers took to invade India) in the northwest, and up to **Panjnad** in the south where the five rivers of Punjab fell into the Indus.

Legacy

- The Maharaja was known for his **just** and **secular rule**.
 - Both Hindus and Muslims were given powerful positions in his darbar.
- He turned **Harmandir Sahib** at Amritsar into the **Golden Temple** by covering it with gold.
- He is also credited with funding **Hazoor Sahib gurudwara** at the final resting place of Guru Gobind Singh in Nanded, Maharashtra.

International Recognition

- In 2016, the town of **St Tropez** in France unveiled the maharaja's **bronze statue** as a mark of respect.
- His throne is displayed prominently at the **Victoria and Albert Museum in London**.
- Last year, **London hosted** an exhibition that focused on the history of the Sikh Empire and the

international relations forged by the Maharaja.

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