



Maharaja Ranjit Singh

Why in News

Recently, the statue of [Maharaja Ranjit Singh](#) which was installed in 2019, vandalised by a member of radical outfit **Tehrik-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP)**, a **religious organisation** at the Lahore Fort in Pakistan's Punjab province.

Key Points

▪ Early Life:



- He was born on **13th November, 1780** in Gujranwala, now in Pakistan.
- He was the **only child of Maha Singh**, on whose death in 1792 he became **chief of the Shukerchakias, a Sikh group**.
- His inheritance included **Gujranwala town and the surrounding villages**, now in Pakistan.

▪ Contribution:

◦ Founder of the Sikh Empire:

- He was the founder of the **Sikh Empire by overthrowing Misls**.
- At that time, **Punjab was ruled by powerful chieftains** who had divided



the territory into Misls.

- **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**.
- He ruled the **northwest Indian subcontinent** in the early half of the **19th century**.
- 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 a French General 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 **Harimandir 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.

▪ **Death:**

- He died at **Lahore in June 1839**, almost exactly 40 years after he entered the city as a conqueror.
- In little more than six years after his death, the **Sikh state he had created collapsed** because of the **internecine strife of rival chiefs**.

▪ **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**.
- In 2018, London hosted an **exhibition that focused on the history of the Sikh Empire** and the **international relations forged by the Maharaja**.

[Source: IE](#)