

The Real History of the Koh-I-Noor Diamond and British Government's Refusal

Sana Shabir*

Faculty of Creative Arts and Design Lincoln College University of Malaysia

*Corresponding author's e-mail: sanashabir374@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In-depth research is done on the Koh-i-Noor Diamond in this article, including its origins, journey through numerous empires, and contentious purchase by the British. The diamond is still in the British monarchy's hands despite appeals for its restoration to its nation of origin, sparking contentious arguments and discussions. This essay explores the historical, legal, and geopolitical elements that have influenced this ongoing conflict to shed light on the complex causes that go into the British government's refusal to give up the Koh-i-Noor Diamond. This study offers a thorough knowledge of the complex issues relating to the ownership and repatriation of the Koh-i-Noor Diamond through a review of historical events, cultural importance, international legislation, and modern perspectives. The results of this study highlight the significance of historical background, global legal frameworks, and diplomatic considerations in determining the British government's current position and the difficulties associated with resolving historical complaints. The results of this study highlight the importance of gems in history.

Keywords: *Koh-i-Noor; Diamond; Elements; Perspectives; Cultural; British Governments and International Legislation.*

Background

One of the best prominent and historic diamonds in the world, the Koh-i-Noor Diamond, has attracted people's attention and inspired debate for ages. This priceless stone, which comes from the Golconda mines in India, has changed hands through conquest and diplomacy and has witnessed the rise and fall of empires. But the Koh-i-Noor Diamond's inclusion in the British Head Gems has garnered a lot of attention, prompting inquiries about its true ownership and demands for its return. The goal of this study is to investigate the Koh-i-Noor Diamond's actual history, revealing its trans-dimensional trip, and to comprehend the factors that led to the British government's unwillingness to return the diamond to its

nation of origin. This research aims to provide an exhaustive examination of the countless aspects that support to the ongoing ownership dispute over the diamond by looking at historical events, cultural contexts, international laws, and contemporary viewpoints. The past of Koh-I-Noor Diamond's is essential to understanding the dynamics that surround its current ownership. The diamond originated in India's Golconda region and passed through the hands of several kings, including the Persian Shahs and the Mughals. Because of the diamond's size, brightness, and supposed supernatural qualities, which increased its attractiveness and drew conquerors looking for prestige and attractive (Ali & Abbas, 2022).

The British East India Company's conquest of the area in the middle of the 19th century as part of its colonial expansion in India, the Koh-I-Noor Diamond was kept in the Punjab region. Following the British victory in the Second Anglo-Sikh War, the diamond was given to Queen Victoria, securing its place within the British monarchy. The Koh-I-Noor Diamond has enormous cultural and symbolic significance for the Indian people, which raises the problem of repatriation. It is regarded as a component of their cultural legacy, representing the origin's region's history, identity, and sovereignty. In order to regain a physical representation of Indian history, successive Indian governments and cultural organizations have demanded its repatriation. This study tries to offer a nuanced perspective of this divisive topic by delving into the actual antiquity of the Koh-i-Noor Diamond and examining the justifications for the British government's unwillingness to return it. By considering the viewpoints of both the claimants and the existing caretakers, it aims to give light on the difficulties involved in repatriating historical artefacts (Chaille, 2019).

The Koh-i-Noor Diamond's historical journey, the British government's defenses of holding onto it, an analysis of the international legal systems, and an examination of the general implications and potential solutions to this ongoing dispute are covered in the sections that follow.

Literature Review

Humans have long been enthralled by gemstones because of their aesthetic appeal, rarity, and purported metaphysical qualities. This survey of the literature offers a summary of significant academic studies and research on gemstones, covering a range of topics including geological formation, gemological qualities, historical relevance, cultural connotations, and market trends. The references we've chosen here provide insightful information about the fascinating world of gemstones. The book by Dan Hausel specializes in the rocks, minerals, and jewels found in Wyoming, USA. It offers thorough details on the state's geology, gemstone occurrence, and gemstone identification. For people interested in discovering and collecting local gemstones, this reference is especially helpful. By Antoinette Matlins and Chopra "Gems and Gemology: Understanding, Buying, and Selling" The book by Antoinette Matlins and Chopra offers a thorough analysis of the gemstone industry, covering subjects like gemstone appraisal, grading, and market trends (Chopra, 1976). The authors also explore the moral and legal issues related to the trade in gemstones. For anyone interested in gemstones, gemologists, and those working in the gemstone industry, this reference is a priceless tool. Written by Robert Simmons and Ahsian, "The Book of Stones: Who They Are and What They Teach".

The metaphysical and therapeutic benefits of many gemstones are covered in "The Book of Stones". Individual stones are described in length by Robert Simmons and Ahsian, along with information about their spiritual properties and their uses for advancing one's own personal and spiritual development. People who are interested in the metaphysical properties of gemstones and crystal therapy frequently consult this source (Dehejia, 1997). Anna M. Miller's "Gems and Jewelry Appraising: Techniques of Professional Practice" The book by Anna M. Miller is primarily concerned with valuing and assessing precious stones and jewelry. It offers details on the procedures, requirements, and factors involved in valuing gemstones for insurance, estate, and resale purposes. The gemstone appraisal industry holds this source in high respect (Chopra, 1976).

The book by Evans provides a thorough analysis of gemstone science and technology. It includes subjects like crystallography, gemstone treatments, and gemstone creation. The author also looks into how gemstones are used in a variety of fields, such as technology, jewelry, and optics. For anyone interested in learning more about gemstones from a scientific perspective, this reference is a great tool (Evans, 1989). The perspectives on gemstones presented in these chosen references span geological, gemological, historical, cultural, and market-related perspectives. They serve as important resources for scholars, gemologists, enthusiasts, and professionals working with these precious stones because they lay the groundwork for comprehending the scientific, aesthetic, and cultural value of gemstones.

Method

Research on "The Real History of the Koh-i-Noor Diamond and Why the British Won't Return It" often combines historical investigation with evaluation of primary and secondary sources as well as consideration of legal and geopolitical issues. An overview of the potential technique for such a study is provided below:

Literature Review: To gain a thorough understanding of the Koh-i-Noor Diamond's history, its cultural significance, and the disputes over its ownership, conduct an extensive review of relevant literature, including books, scholarly articles, historical accounts, legal texts, and cultural studies. **Primary Source Analysis:** To compile firsthand testimonies and historical proof of the purchase, possession, and transfer of the diamond, examine primary sources such as historical documents, letters, and government records from various eras. **Analysis of Secondary materials:** Examine secondary materials, such as scholarly writings, academic works, and professional opinions, to learn more about various viewpoints on the Koh-i-Noor Diamond, its cultural value, and the justifications offered for and against its repatriation. **Legal Framework Analysis:** To comprehend the legal ramifications of the ownership and return of the Koh-i-Noor Diamond, examine international treaties, laws, and conventions connected to cultural heritage, artefacts, and repatriation. Investigate the geopolitical aspects, such as diplomatic ties, historical claims, and local laws governing cultural property, that might have an impact on the British government's position on the return of the diamond. **Synthesis and Analysis:** Compile and examine the information received, looking for trends, themes, and arguments concerning the Koh-i-Noor Diamond's past and the justifications for the British government's choice not to return it. To offer a fair appraisal, consider opposing viewpoints and reasons. It is crucial to keep in mind that performing such research may have its drawbacks, such as gaps in historical records or conflicting accounts of what happened. It is still possible to provide a thorough grasp of the diamond's history and the elements influencing the British government's attitude on its return by using a rigorous methodology (Smith, 2008).

Discussion

In alluvial mines in India, the diamond and sand were separated thousands of years ago. Hinduism maintains that even though it appeared to be cursed based on the luck of its owners, it was revered by gods like Krishna. The gem, later known as the Koh-I-Noor Diamond, was in the British Crown Jewels by the middle of the 1800s after navigating Indian royal intrigues. An amateur geologist from Britain interviewed gemologists and historians about the diamond's origins to write the history of the Koh-I-Noor. The majority of later accounts of the diamond were built on this history. However, according to historians Anita Anand and William Dalrymple, that geologist was completely mistaken (Firouzeh, 2015). According to Dalrymple, "We found what every historian longs for." A story that is very important to people and a well-known object in the world are supported by a mythical structure.

The newly released book *Koh-I-Noor: The History of the World's Most Famous Diamond* by Anand and Dalrymple uncovers the truth about the diamond by looking into more than four centuries of Indian

history. As the Indians sieved river sand for diamonds, Anand compares the procedure to "panning the old research." In addition, there is drama from the past itself. According to Dalrymple, "it's a perfectly scripted Game of Thrones-style epic." Every single bit of love, blood, gore, and glitter. But beneath the drama of the diamond is a more important question, one that has still received no definitive answer: How should modern governments respond to a colonial-era history of piracy? Because so many countries, including India, Pakistan, and the Taliban in Afghanistan, have claimed ownership of the Koh-I-Noor, it is a topic of intense debate. To understand where the diamond came from and whether it could ever return, one must delve into the shadowy past when the Mughals ruled over India (Fane, 1842).

At the Throne of Gemstones

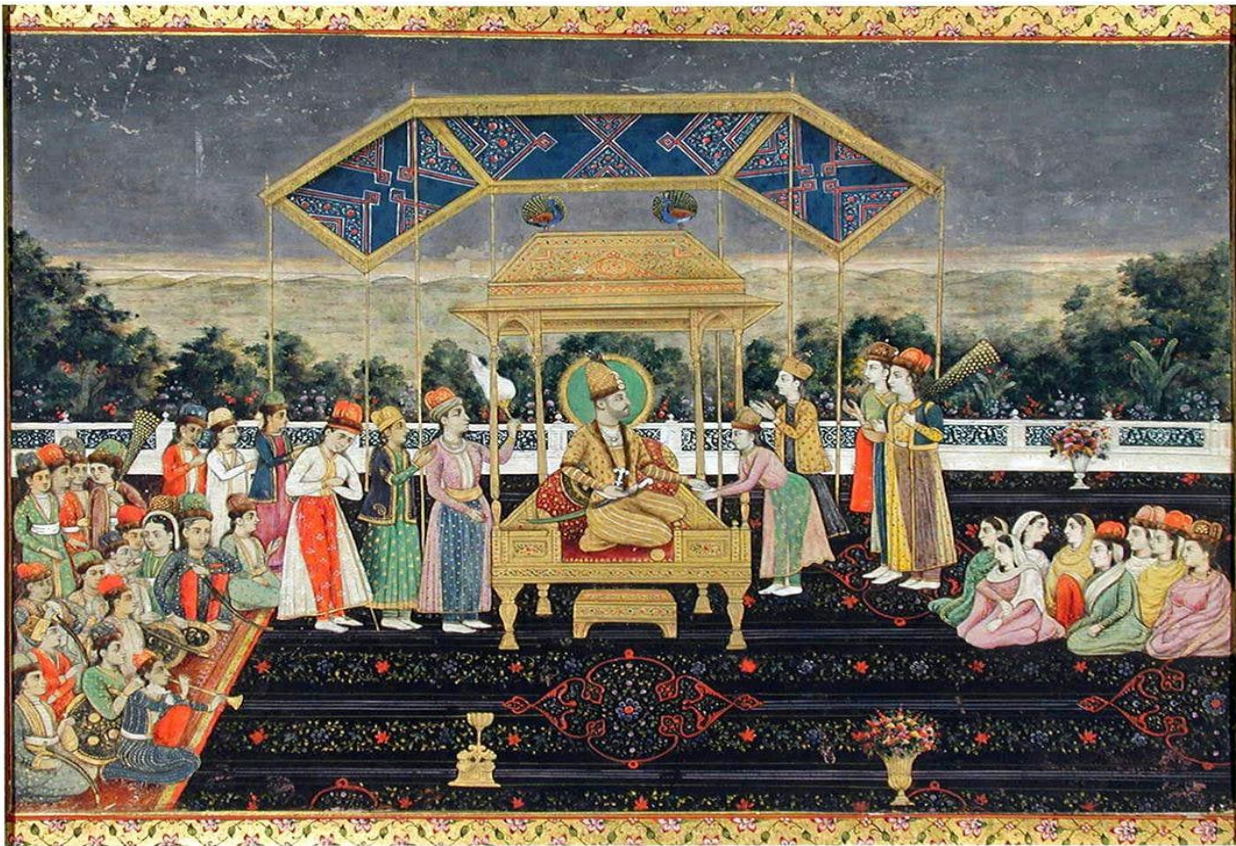


Figure 1: Nader Shah sat on the Koh-i-Noor Diamond-Encrusted Peacock Throne

India had long been the world's only source of diamonds until the discovery of diamond mines in Brazil in 1725. Because most of the diamonds were alluvial, which means they could be distinguished from river sands, the monarchs of the subcontinent accepted their status as the first diamond connoisseurs. Jewelry predominated over clothing in many ancient Indian courts and served as a visual indicator of court hierarchy. According to Dalrymple and Anand in their book, strict guidelines were established regarding which degree of courtier could wear which gem in which setting. The world's oldest gemological books, which offer complex classification schemes for numerous stone types, are also found in India (Hendley, 1906).

By crossing the Kyber Pass between modern-day Afghanistan and Pakistan during his invasion of India in 1526, the Turco-Mongol leader Zahir-ud-din Babur created the Islamic Mughal dynasty and started a new era of gemstone mania. The Mughals ruled northern India for 330 years, enlarging their domain to encompass almost all present-day Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India. Even though it is impossible to specify precisely when and where the Koh-I-Noor came into the Mughals' possession, there is a certain period

when it first appears in the recorded record. The Mughal monarch Shah Jahan placed an order for a spectacular, gem-encrusted throne in 1628. The elaborate structure was inspired by the fabled throne of Solomon, the mythical Hebrew king who is mentioned in the histories of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Shah Jahan's throne cost four times as much to build as the Taj Mahal, which took seven years to construct. Ahmad Shah Lahore, a court historian who documented the throne, claimed (Jackson-Stops, 1985).

“The canopy was to be made of enamel work with rubies, garnets, and other precious stones lavishly arranged inside and out. The canopy was to be supported by emerald columns. On top of each pillar, two peacocks were to be lavishly encrusted with gemstones, and in the space between each peacock, there was to be a tree adorned with rubies, diamonds, emeralds, and pearls. (Singh, 2012)”.

The two very huge gems that would ultimately become the most valuable of all the precious stones that adorned the throne were the Koh-i-Noor diamond and the Timor Ruby, which the Mughals esteemed more highly because they liked colored stones. At the very pinnacle of the throne, a sparkling gemstone peacock's head was where the diamond was put. After the Peacock Throne was created, the Mughal Empire ruled over India and the rest of the world for another century. With 2 million citizens in Delhi, the capital, more people lived there than in London and Paris combined, making it the richest state in Asia. Other Central Asian princes, like Nader Shah of Persia, were drawn to such wealth, nevertheless. The slaughter that followed Nader's invasion of Delhi in 1739 cost the country's resources and resulted in tens of thousands of deaths. And you believed that Aladdin's commotion was exaggerated by Disney. Nader escaped the city with so much gold and gems that it took 700 elephants, 4,000 camels, and 12,000 horses to move the looted goods. Nader stole the Peacock Throne as part of his booty, but he also removed the Timor Ruby and Koh-i-Noor diamond to wear on a wristband. The Koh-i-Noor would reside in what would eventually become Afghanistan for 70 years before returning to India. It changed hands between various rulers in one gory tragedy after another, including one who blinded his own son and another who was overthrown and had his head covered in molten gold. A power vacuum developed in India as a result of the conflict between Central Asian tribes, and the British quickly seize (Knuth, 2007).

The British Crown and The Boy King

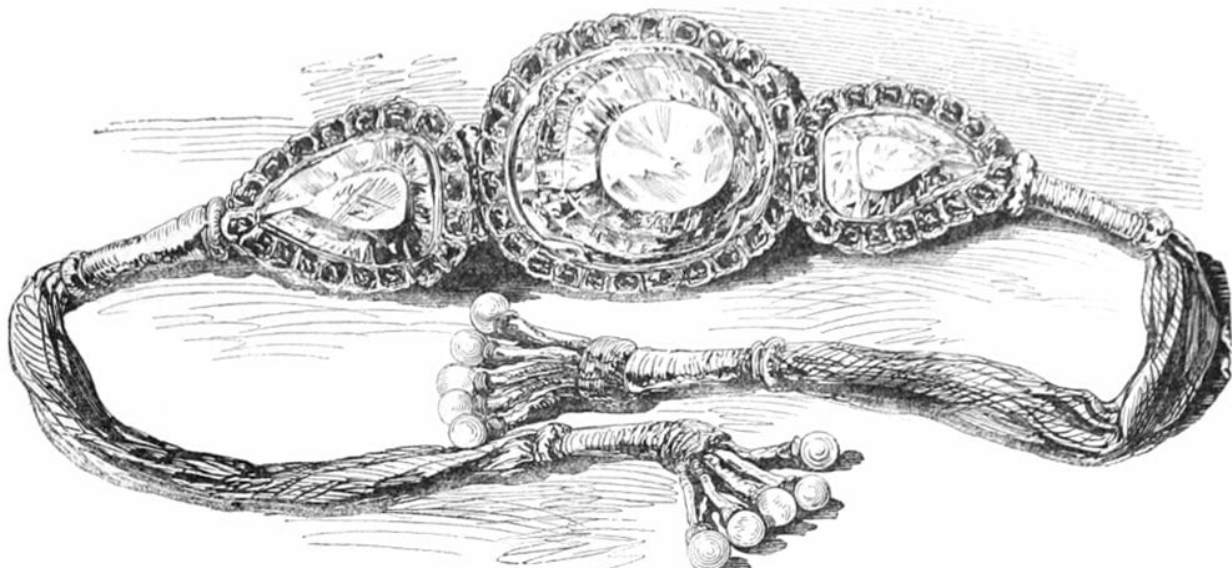


Figure 2: The Koh-i-Noor Diamond (center) as It was Depicted Before It Was Given to the British

Around the start of the 19th century, the British East India Company expanded its sphere of influence from coastal ports into the interior of the Indian subcontinent. According to Dalrymple and Anand's description of British efforts, "[they] would ultimately annex more territory than all of Napoleon's

conquests in Europe." In addition to capturing additional natural resources and commercial locations, the British also had their sights set on a precious piece of treasure known as the Koh-i-Noor. The diamond eventually returned to India after many years of conflict, when it was purchased by the Sikh monarch Ranjit Singh in 1813. Singh's unique affinity for the gem consolidated its aura of prestige and power. In addition to the fact that Ranjit Singh "liked diamonds and respected the stone's vast monetary value," Anand and Dalrymple argue that the stone "seems to have held a far greater symbolism for him." He had acquired back almost all of the Indian territories that the Afghan Durrani family had lost since the rule of Ahmad Shah [who pillaged Delhi in 1761]. According to Anand, Singh's decision to raise the diamond was a pivotal moment in its history (Losty, 2015). Anand asserts that the transformation is amazing when the diamond starts to stand for strength rather than beauty. It changes into this jewel that resembles the ring from *The Lord of the Rings*: one ring to rule them all.

For the British, that aura of status and power was too enticing. If they could rule both the country and the jewel of India, it would be evidence of their might and imperial prowess. It was a treasure worth dying for and fighting for now more than ever. Before his death in 1839, according to the British newspapers, Ranjit Singh wanted to give the diamond and other treasures to a group of Hindu monks. In a piece of anonymous editorial, it was written, "The richest, the most expensive gem in the known world, has been committed to the trust of a profane, idolatrous, and mercenary priesthood." The author of the book recommended the British East India Company to take all necessary actions to locate the Koh-i-Noor in order. However, the colonists had to endure a turbulent era of shifting kings first. The Punjabi throne was held for four years by four different people after Ranjit Singh's death in 1839. Only a young boy named Duleep Singh and his mother Rani Jindan were still in line to inherit the throne at the end of the violent era. In addition, after imprisoning Jindan, the British made Duleep to sign a formal document amending the Treaty of Lahore in 1849, which required Duleep to renounce his claim to the Koh-I-Noor and any other territorial claims. Only ten years old, the boy. Queen Victoria remained the delighted owner of the gem ever after. In 1851, it was on display at the Great Exhibition in London, but the British audience was taken aback by how simple it was. *The Times* stated in June 1851 that "many people find a difficulty in bringing themselves to believe, from its external appearance, that it is anything but a piece of common glass (Sharma, 2008).

The stone's bad reception led Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, to urge that it be recut and polished. The stone's size was cut in half during this process, but the brilliance of light reflecting off of it was enhanced. The diamond, which Victoria wore as a brooch, later became a part of the Crown Jewels and was included into the crowns of Queen Mary, Victoria's granddaughter, and Queen Alexandra, her eldest daughter and the future wife of her eldest son, Edward VII. The diamond-encrusted crown was first worn in its current prominent position by the Queen Mother, George VI's wife and the grandmother of Elizabeth II, in 1937. The crown was last viewed in public in 2002 when it was affixed to the coffin. One thing is certain when it comes to the Koh-i-Noor: there is a great deal of controversy. The Koh-I-Noor is still shrouded in legend and mystery, including a notion that it is a cursed diamond (Simmons & Ahsian, 2015).

According to Dalrymple, if you were to ask anyone what should be done with Jewish art that the Nazis had confiscated, everyone would concur that it ought to be given back to its rightful owners. "But we've learned to avoid using the same phrase to describe the Indian loot that was taken at the point of a gun hundreds of years ago. What moral distinction can be made between items that were forcibly taken during colonial times. For Anand, the issue is much more personal. The Indian members of her family visited her frequently. She was raised and born in the UK. When they would visit the Tower of London and see the Koh-I-Noor in the Crown Jewels, Anand recalled them "spending copious amounts of time swearing themselves blue at the glass case with the diamond" (Boissoneault, 2017).



Figure 3: In 1887, Queen Victoria wore a Brooch Made of the Koh-i-Noor Diamond.



Figure 4: The Queen Mother with Princess Elizabeth (as Elizabeth II), Her Oldest Child, at the Coronation of George VI When She Was Wearing Her Crown.

For Anand, the issue is much more personal. The Indian members of her family visited her frequently. She was raised and born in the UK. Anand recalls them "spending copious amounts of time swearing

themselves blue at the glass case with the diamond" whenever they went to the Tower of London to see the Koh-i-Noor in the Crown Jewels. The Legendary History of a Cursed Gem: Hope Diamond Author One of the reasons these diamonds were known as being "cursed" is, according to Richard Kurin, Because of how they were obtained, they are the Smithsonian's first Distinguished Scholar and Ambassador-at-Large. The powerless have no choice but to curse the powerful when they steal things from them, Kurin continues. At the 1851 London Exposition, the Hope diamond, which was also an Indian creation like the Koh-i-Noor, was on display. It is currently on exhibit in the National Museum of Natural History thanks to Harry Winston, who donated it after legally purchasing it (Ali & Abbas, 2022). Kurin also argues that while investigating the past owners of a diamond like the Koh-i-Noor is wise practise, it isn't necessarily necessary legally (although some academics and attorneys disagree). Both he and Dalrymple emphasise that the rulers who once held these diamonds were in command of vanished nations. That is one of the biggest differences between them. One of the biggest differences between objects taken during colonial invasion and art and treasure looted by Nazis is the difficulty in determining who has the original and most trustworthy claim to anything (Chaille, 2019) According to Jane Milosch, the director of the Smithsonian's Provenance Research Initiative, "post-colonial collections is a big topic everywhere." The question of "does it make sense to keep this material?" can be reexamined even if we might have legal ownership of some things. She refers to a 2014 incident in which the British Museum returned to Nigeria two bronze statues that had been seized from Benin in 1897 by Nigerian attackers (after the deaths of British officers on a trade expedition). Recovering treasures from World War II and stolen gold, however challenging it may be, is still much easier than reconstructing colonial history. "You're dealing with countries that existed when the object was acquired, but they may not exist now—and countries with whom we had trade agreements, but who may have different export laws now," Milosch further explains. Because provenance is so challenging to process, people aren't used to doing so. By the time you get to the second or third owner, the information can have been more difficult to locate over time. Because of this, I think it's imperative that these objects be kept in museums so that people can at least look at them and research them before we can be certain (Giusti, 2006).



Figure 5: The Koh-i-Noor Diamond is the Focal Point of The Queen Mother's Crown

There are other disputed treasures that are currently housed in the UK besides the Koh-i-Noor. The Elgin Marbles, statues chiselled 2,500 years ago that were removed from the Parthenon in Athens by British Lord Elgin in the early 1800s, are possibly just as contentious. Despite requests for their return, the sculptures and the diamond are still in the UK's possession (Dehejia, 1997).

Making the Koh-i-Noor's past more transparent, in Anand's opinion, is one option that doesn't involve taking the diamond out of the UK. "I would sincerely appreciate it if there was a pretty obvious sign by the exhibit. It is widely believed that India sent this to Britain as a gift. I would like the diamond to be accompanied by the accurate history. Dalrymple concurs that educating people about the real past is only half the battle. "Every time we give a talk; we encounter individuals who are shocked by history. However, they are not resistant they were simply unaware of it. It's unlikely that the diamond will ever leave the Crown Jewels. Anand and Dalrymple can only hope that their study will be useful in illuminating the real course that the infamous gemstone took and in assisting leaders in reaching their own decisions over what to do with it moving forward (Giusti, 2006).

Conclusion

The Koh-i-Noor Diamond's history is a convoluted one of conquest, diplomacy, and cultural importance. The British government has persistently refused to return the diamond to its nation of origin despite requests for this to happen. The Koh-i-Noor Diamond's actual history was investigated in this study, along with the factors that led to the British government's choice. The Koh-i-Noor Diamond's history spans several centuries; it began in the Golconda mines in India and has been in the possession of numerous kings, including the Mughals and Persian Shahs. An important turning point was when the British East India Company bought it during the colonial expansion in India. Later, the diamond was given to Queen Victoria, which cemented its status within the British monarchy. Legal justifications, geopolitical factors, and the diamond's historical position within British heritage all have an impact on the diamond. These elements play a part in the current discussion about cultural heritage, restitution, and the difficulties in resolving historical grievances. The Koh-i-Noor Diamond's ownership status and eventual repatriation are still up in the air. In order to traverse the difficulties of repatriating cultural artefacts while taking into account the historical and legal circumstances in which they were acquired, the study emphasizes the necessity for continual communication, comprehension, and cooperation between governments, cultural organizations, and communities. In the end, the Koh-i-Noor Diamond will always be associated with cultural heritage, disputed ownership, and the ongoing debate over reparations and the duties of custodian states. It serves as a reminder of the difficulties and obstacles encountered in resolving historical wrongdoings and paving the way for a more inclusive and fair strategy for preserving cultural assets.

Declaration

Ethics approval and consent to participate: Not applicable.

Conflict of interests: Not applicable.

Acknowledgement: Gratitude to the supervisor for the immense support extended throughout the preparation of this manuscript.

References

- Ali, M., & Abbas, M. (2022). Jewellery of the Indian Subcontinent: A Significant Cultural Element. *Journal of Development and Social Sciences*, 3(2), 901-915. [https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2022\(3-II\)81](https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2022(3-II)81)
- Boissoneault, L. (2017). The true story of the Koh-i-Noor diamond—And why the British won't give it back'. *Smithsonian Magazine*.
- Chaille, F. (2019). *The Cartier Collection: Jewelry*. <https://www.rizzoliusa.com/book/9782080203786/>
- Chopra, P. N. (1976). *Life and Letters under the Mughals*. (No Title).
- Dehejia, V. (1997). *Indian Art*. New York, NY: Phaidon Press.[not found] https://artindia.critstudies.calarts.edu/Dahejia-MughalArt_.pdf
- Evans, J. (1989). *A history of jewellery, 1100-1870*. Courier Corporation.
- Fane, H. E. (1842). *Five Years in India 1835–1839*. London: Henry Colburn.
- Firouzeh, M., (2015). *The Art of Minakari*. Persiada. <https://persianhandicrafts.wordpress.com/2015/02/27/the-art-of-minakari/>
- Giusti, A. M. (2006). *Pietre Dure: The Art of Semiprecious Stonework*. Getty Publications.
- Hendley, T. H. (1906). *The Journal of Indian Art*, vol. 12. W. Griggs and Sons. University of Minnesota Libraries. <https://archive.org/details/IndianJewelleryHendley>
- Jackson-Stops, G. (1985). *The treasure houses of Britain: five hundred years of private patronage and art collecting*. (No Title).
- Knuth, B. G. (2007). *Gems in Myth, Legend, and Lore*. Jewelers Press.
- Losty, J. P. (2015). Raja Jivan Ram: A Professional Indian Portrait Painter of the Early Nineteenth Century. *Electronic British Library Journal*, 3, 18.
- Singh, J. P. (2012). *Gulab Singh, the founder ruler of J&K*. Daily Excelsior.
- Sharma, R. D., (2008), *Handcrafted Indian Enamel Jewellery*, Roli Books Pvt Ltd.
- Simmons, R., & Ahsian, N. (2015). *The book of stones: Who they are and what they teach*. North Atlantic Books.
- Smith, D. (2008). *The Pearl: A True Tale of Forbidden Love in Catherine the Great's Russia*. Yale University Press.