

# **Jewel in the Crown: Empire & India**

Source book



# Visit to the Crown Jewels

## What to see – exhibition highlights

The crown jewels are the most powerful symbols of the British monarchy and hold deep religious and cultural significance in our nation's history.

### The Sovereign's sceptre

The Cullinan Diamond, or Great Star of Africa, was added to the top of the Sovereign's sceptre in 1910.

### Imperial State crown

The Imperial State crown is worn by the Queen at each State Opening of Parliament. It is one of the youngest crowns in the collection but holds a number of much older gems.

### The crown of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother

The crown of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother is set with 2,800 diamonds including the most famous diamond in the Jewel House, the Koh-i-Nûr.



The Imperial State Crown, 1937



The Crown of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, 1937



The Sovereign's Sceptre with Cross, 1661

# Jewel in the Crown: Empire & India

## Question 1:

Should the British have taken the Koh-i-Nur?

“The British were masters in another person’s home; their presence in India was a humiliation for the Indians.

Under British rule, Indian industry fell behind; Indian treasure flowed to Britain as profit or plunder.”

*Louis Fisher, British Historian (1986)*

“No one feels more strongly than I do about India or how much I opposed our taking these countries and I think no more will be taken, for it is very wrong and no advantage to us. You know also how much I dislike wearing the Koh-i-Nûr.”

*Queen Victoria*

“Diamonds are primarily meant for kings and queens, India no longer has a King or Queen so does not need diamonds.”

*N.B Sen, Indian Historian*

“The Koh-i-Nûr has been of ill fortune only to a few who have lost it. To the long line of emperors, conquerors and potentates who through successive centuries have possessed it, it has been the symbol of victory and empire. And surely never more than to our Queen.”

*Governor General Dalhousie*

“Either you take the view that objects should stay in the country from which they artistically or geologically sprang, or you say things, through the passage of time and circumstance, change hands; and that is the nature of cultural exchange.”

*Anna Keay, Historian*

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### Question 2:

Did Duleep Singh willingly give up his kingdom and the Koh-i-Nur?

“He does not care two pence – he will have a good amount of money without tax all his life and will die in his bed like a gentleman”

*Lord Dalhousie on signing of treaty by Duleep*

“To the editor of the Times,

Finding only a helpless child, Lord Dalhousie annexed the Punjab instead of the solemn compact of the British government; sold almost all of my property, consisting of jewels, gold and silver plate. I have been most unjustly deprived of my kingdom.

*Your most obliged servant,  
Duleep Singh”*

*Letter from Duleep Singh to The Times in August 1882*

**What does this portrait tell us about Singh’s life under the British?**

“....your mother [the Queen] proclaims herself sovereign of a throne and an empire both of which have been acquired by fraud.”

*Extract from Duleep’s letter to Prince of Wales*



Portrait of Duleep Singh  
commissioned by Queen Victoria

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### Question 3:

Is the income generated by the Koh-i-Nûr more important than its cultural value?

“The British connection has made India more helpless than she ever was before.

She has become so poor that she has little power of resisting famines. Before the British, India spun and wove in her millions of cottages. This cottage industry, so vital for India’s existence, has been ruined.”

*Gandhi Statement (1922)*

Which attraction at the Tower of London did you visit first?	
Crown Jewels	47%
White Tower	13%
Rest of the White Tower	1%
Medieval Palace	10%
Prisoners of the Tower displays	6%
Yeoman Warder Tours	17%

Table showing popularity of Crown Jewels

“The story of the Koh-i-Nur is the history of India and this unique diamond is as dear to India as Shakespeare is to England.”

*N.B Sen, Indian Historian*



A GENTLEMAN FROM THE COUNTRY MISTAKES THE CRYSTAL SENT BY THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE FOR THE KOH-I-NOOR DIAMOND.

Punch Cartoon showing British reaction to Koh-i-Nur

## Question 4:

### Is the issue of giving back the Koh-i-Nur just too complicated?

"The [Koh-i-Nûr's] return to Pakistan would be a convincing demonstration of the spirit that moved Britain voluntarily to shed its imperial encumbrances and lead the process of decolonisation."

*Pakistani Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in letter to British Counterpart James Callaghan (1976)*

"I need not remind you of the various hands through which the stone has passed over the past two centuries, nor that explicit provision for its transfer to the British Crown was made in the peace treaty with the Maharajah of Lahore which concluded the war of 1849. I could not advise Her Majesty the Queen that it should be surrendered."

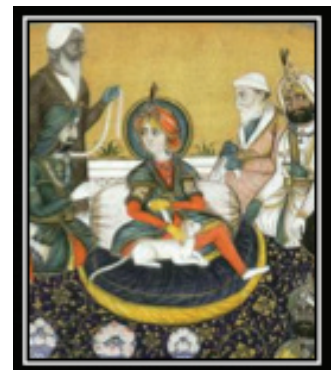
*James Callaghan in response to above correspondence from Pakistani Prime Minister*

"If you say yes to one you suddenly find the British Museum would be empty...I am afraid to say, it is going to have to stay put."

*David Cameron on visit to India (2010)*

"The [Koh-i-Nur] was in Moghul possession in India for 213 years, in Afghan possession for 66 years, in Sikh possession in Lahore for 36 years and in British possession for 127 years. Just who should it be returned to?"

*Sir Olaf Caroe (1972)*



## Yes the Koh-i-Nûr should be returned to India

1. The British should not have taken the Koh-i-Nûr in the first place because...

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2. Maharajah Duleep Singh willingly gave up his kingdom because....

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3. The tourism value of the Koh-i-Nûr is ...

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4. The Koh-i-Nûr should be returned because...

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5. Additional points...

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## No the Koh-i-Nûr should not be returned to India

1. The British were justified in taking the Koh-i-Nûr because...

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2. Maharajah Duleep Singh did not willingly give up his kingdom because....

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3. The cultural value of the Koh-i-Nûr is...

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4. The Koh-i-Nûr should not be returned because...

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5. Additional points...

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