



## An overview on Koh-I-Noor Diamond

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**Abstract:** *The Kohinoor Diamond is one of the most famous diamonds in the world. According to all references, Koh-i-noor was never that great to look at in its early days. It was just another diamond that was dull, non-sparkling and a little yellow in appearance. The Kohinoor diamond was first mentioned in 1306 when it was taken from a Rajah of Malwa, whose family had held the diamond for centuries. It was described as weighing 186 carats and was an oval cut white diamond - the shape and size of a small hen's egg. The Kohinoor diamond belonged to various Indian and Persian rulers but it became part of the Crown Jewels of England at the time that Queen Victoria was proclaimed empress of India. The Kohinoor was re-cut at this time and now weighs 108.93 carats and is kept in the Tower of London.*

**Key words:** *Koh-i-noor, unconquerable, Legend*

### Introduction

The diamond is more than just aesthetically beautiful—it's an enduring symbol of love, romance, and commitment. The stone's name is derived from the Greek word *adamas*, which translates to "unconquerable." This symbolic meaning lends itself well to the diamond's historic commemoration of eternal love. The earliest diamonds were found in India in 4th century BC, although the youngest of these deposits were formed 900 million years ago. A majority of these early stones were transported along the network of trade routes that connected India and China, commonly known as the Silk Road. The Kohinoor is one of the oldest and most famous diamonds in the world. There was a period when Indian diamonds were very famous the world over. These included the Koh-i-noor, Orlov, the Great Moghul, Darya-i-noor, Indore pears, Shah and Arcots. These were all part of the treasure houses of the great emperors of India. Today, they are all in the hands of outsiders. The legendary Koh-i-noor has been in the eye of the storm ever since it left the hands of its original owners - a

diamond which was never bought or sold, but changed many hands. Koh-i-noor has left a trail that speaks of greed, power, murder, mayhem and unhappiness.

### The History Timeline of the Kohinoor Diamond


The following timeline & history of the Kohinoor details important historical events and dates:

**1200 - 1300's:** There were many dynasties who owned the Kohinoor diamond including the Slave dynasty (1206-90), the Khilji dynasty (1290-1320), the Tughlaq dynasty (1320-1413), the Sayyid dynasty (1414-51), and the Lodi dynasty (1451-1526) These were all brief reigns ending with war and violence

**1306:** In 1306 the Rajah of Malwa was forced to give the diamond to the rulers of the Kakatiya Empire

**1323:** Soon after, in 1323, the Kakatiya Empire fell after a rule stretching from 1083 to 1323. The diamond was taken by Muhammad bin Tughluq who became the Sultan of Delhi from 1325 to 135



<b>The Kohinoor (Koh-i-Noor)</b>	
	<p>The Kohinoor (Koh-i-Noor) originated from India in Golconda at the Kollur mine and was specifically mined from the Rayalaseema diamond mine (meaning Land of Stones) during the rule of the Kakatiya dynasty. The Kohinoor was then passed from one ruling dynasty to the next. The original name of the diamond was 'Samantik Mani' (Prince and leader among diamonds).</p>

**1323 – 1526:** The diamond came into the possession of the Delhi Sultanate which consisted of many Muslim dynasties that ruled in India to 1526. During the Delhi Sultanate Muslim armies consisting of Mongol, Turkic, Persian, and Afghan warriors invaded India

**1526:** In 1526 the Kohinoor Diamond passed to the Mughal Empire when the Timurid Prince Babur defeated Ibrahim Lodi, the last of the Delhi Sultans, at the First Battle of Panipat. Mughal is the Persian word for Mongol. Babur mentions in his memoirs, the Baburnama, that the diamond had belonged to an un-named Rajah of Malwa

The Mughal Empire ruled most of the Indian subcontinent for two hundred years and the Kohinoor passed from one Mughal Emperor to the next. Violence and bloodshed followed these years often marked by the sons of the Emperors rebelling and overtaking their fathers

The Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan (1592 – 1666), who was famous for building the

Taj Mahal, had the Kohinoor Diamond placed into his ornate Peacock Throne

**1639:** The Koh-i-Noor changed ownership several more times until the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan took the throne. In 1639 a struggle for the Empire started between his four sons - Dara Shikoh, Shah Shuja, Aurangzeb and Murad Baksh when brother killed brother. Shah Shuja executed his brother Dara Shikoh and in then 1658 Aurangzeb defeated Shuja and Shuja who was tortured to death together with all his family

**1665:** In 1665 Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605 – 1689), French traveller and pioneer of jewelry and diamond trade with India, recorded his experiences in which he describes a great Mughal diamond said to be the biggest in the world. It was called the "Great Mogul" by Tavernier

**1739:** In 1739 the Persian King Nadir Shah invaded the Mughal Empire defeating their Emperor and stole the great Koh-i-Noor diamond (Nadir Shah is credited with giving the diamond the



name it is known by today). The Koh-i-Noor Diamond was taken to Persia

**1747:** In 1747 the empire of Nadir Shah quickly disintegrated after he was assassinated - the Curse of the Kohinoor strikes again? After Nadir Shah's assassination, the diamond passed to his successors, each were dethroned and ritually blinded (Blinding was used to render an enemy powerless and make him a burden on his community.)

**1800:** 1800 - Ranjit Singh took the Empire and possession of the Kohinoor diamond. Rajah Ranjit Singh died in 1839 and his successors lacked his bravery and vision

The Sikh kingdom became weak and the British conquered India which became part of the British Empire and the British Raj or rule gained control of India from 1858 – 1947

The British Governor-General of India, Lord Dalhousie, was responsible for the British acquiring the Koh-i-Noor

**1851:** 1851 - Dalhousie arranged that the Kohinoor diamond should be presented by Ranjit Singh's successor, Duleep Singh, to Queen Victoria, the Empress of India

**1851:** 1851 - The Great Exhibition was staged in Hyde Park in London when the Koh-i-Noor was put on view to the British public

**1852:** In 1852 Prince Albert ordered that the Koh-i-Noor diamond to be re-cut from 186 carats to its current 105 carats thus increasing its brilliance. The Koh-i-Noor diamond was mounted in a tiara with more than two thousand other diamonds. The Koh-i-Noor diamond was then used as the centre piece of the crowns of the Queen consorts to the British Kings. The

Queen Consorts Queen Alexandra and Queen Mary wore the crowns

**1936:** In 1936, the stone was set into the crown of the wife of King George VI, Queen Elizabeth (later known as the Queen Mother), wife of King George VI:

The British Royal family were obviously aware of the Curse of the Kohinoor - "He who owns this diamond will own the world, but will also know all its misfortunes. Only God, or a woman, can wear it with impunity." And from the reign of Queen Victoria the Kohinoor diamond has always gone to the wife of the male heir to the British throne. The above history timeline of the Kohinoor diamond details important historical events and dates and the legends and myths that surround the curse of the Koh-i-Noor.

#### **Journey to England:**

The final owner was Maharaja Duleep Singh, son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in the backdrop of the two Sikh Wars leading to the annexation of the Punjab by the British. The hoisting of British flag was on March 29th, 1849 Lahore where Punjab was formally proclaimed a part of the British Empire in India. One of the terms of the Treaty of Lahore was: "The gem called the Koh-i-noor which was taken from Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk by Maharajah Ranjit Singh shall be surrendered by the Maharajah of Lahore to the Queen of England." Dr Sir John Login was entrusted with two charges: to take the Koh-i-noor out of the Toshakhana (the jewel house), and also the guardsmanship of the young Duleep Singh. It was formally handed over to the Punjab government of Sir Henry Lawrence (1806-1857), his younger brother John Lawrence (afterwards Lord Lawrence, the man who in February of



1859 would break ground on the future Lahore railroad station), and C.C. Mausel.

**Kohinoor diamond in Queen-s Victoria brooch:** The diamond was handed to Queen Victoria in July 1850.

When Nadir Shah heard of the diamond, he decided he wants it in his possession. After the diamond was handed to Queen Victoria, it was exhibited at the Crystal Palace a year later. But the "Mountain of Light" was not shiny as the other cut gemstones of that era and there was a general disappointment regarding it. In 1852 the Queen decided to reshape the diamond and it was taken to a Dutch jeweler, Mr Cantor who cut it to 108.93 carats. Queen Victoria wore the diamond occasionally afterwards. She left in her will that the Koh-i-noor should only be worn by a female queen. If the head of state was a man, his wife would have to carry the diamond. After Queen Victoria's death, the Kohinoor became part of the Crown Jewels.

#### **The legend**

It is believed that the diamond was first mentioned more than 5000 years ago in a Sanskrit script, where it was called the Syamantaka. Legend goes that Sun God gave this gem to his disciple Satrajit, but his younger brother Persain snatched it from him. A lion in the forest killed Persain and Jamavant took this gem from the body of Persain and delivered it to Lord Krishna, who restored it to Satrajit. Later, this jewel again came back into the hands of Lord Krishna as dowry when Satrajit gave the hand of his daughter Satyabhama in marriage to him. Lord Krishna gave it back to the Sun God. The Koh-i-noor came into the hands of numerous rulers

till it was possessed by Porus, the king of Punjab, who retained the diamond after a peace treaty in 325 BC when Alexander left India.

Chandragupta Maurya (325-297 B.C.) became the next possessor and passed it on to his grandson Ashoka who ruled from 273-233 B.C. Later it slipped into the hands of Raja Samprati of Ujjain (Ashoka's grandson). This jewel remained in the custody of Ujjain and the Parmar dynasty of Malwa. When Ala-ud-din Khilji (1296-1316 A.D.) defeated Rai Ladhar Deo, the ruler of Malwa in 1306 AD, he acquired the diamond. From this stage up to the time of Mughal Emperor Babur, the history of this precious stone is lost once more. Koh-i-noor comes to light again in year 1526.

Humayun is said to have given the stone to the Shah of Persia for giving him refuge after he lost to Sher Shah. From 1544 to 1547, the Koh-i-noor remained in the possession of Shah Tehmasp of Iran. The Shah sent the Koh-i-noor along with other precious gifts to Burhan Nizam Shah of Ahmednagar (Deccan) for the rulers of the Deccan - Ahmednagar, Golkunda and Bijapur regarded the King of Persia as their religious head. This stone remained in the possession of the Nizam Shahi dynasty of Ahmednagar and the Qutb Shah dynasty of Golkunda in the Deccan for a period of 109 years. How it came back to the Mughals is another gap in history.

After Aurangzeb, this diamond remained consigned into the coffers of the Mughal treasury from 1707 to 1739 A.D. Muhammad Shah Rangila (1719-1748) used to carry this wonder diamond with him in his turban. Nadir Shah got hold of Koh-i-noor when he ransacked Delhi in the 1700s and it went to his successors,



landing in the hands of the Afghan ruler Shah Shuja who handed it to Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1813.

The Koh-i-Noor left the shores of India on April 6, 1850, and on reaching London on July 2, 1850, it was handed over to the Board of Directors of the East India Company. Sir J.W. Logg, the Deputy Chairman of the East India Company, presented it to Queen Victoria. The queen recorded in her journal: "The jewels are truly magnificent. They had also belonged to Ranjit Singh and had

been found in the treasury of Lahore.... I am very happy that the British Crown will possess these jewels for I shall certainly make them Crown Jewels".

Many still await the many treasures which were "stolen" by the British Raj, and no one knows how long the wait will be. But today, if you happen to visit London, please make a stopover at Tower of London and look at the Crown Jewels for the Queen and the Koh-i-noor placed in her crown up front inside a Maltese cross.



It is believed that the diamond was first mentioned more than 5000 years ago in a Sanskrit script, where it was called the Syamantaka . It is worth mentioning that there is only speculation that the Syamantaka and the Kohinoor are the same diamond. After this first written mention, for over 4,000 years the diamond is not mentioned.

**Syamantaka**

The Few- who had history with Koh-i-noor



Maharajah Ranjit Singh



Babur



Nadir Shah



Maharaja Duleep Singh



Queen Victoria

### **Maharajah Ranjit Singh**

Up until 1304 the diamond was in the possession of the Rajas of Malwa, but back then, the diamond was still not named Kohinoor. In 1304, it belonged to the Emperor of Delhi, Allaudin Khilji.

In 1339, the diamond was taken back to the city of Samarkand, where it stayed for almost 300 years. In 1306 in a Hindi writing, a curse is placed on the men who will wear the diamond: "He who owns this diamond will own the world, but will also know all its misfortunes. Only God, or a woman, can wear it with impunity."

Babur

### **Babur**

In 1526 the Mogul ruler Babur mentions the diamond in his writings, Baburmama.

The diamond was gifted to him by the Sultan Ibrahim Lodi.

He was the one who described the diamond's value equal to half-day production costs of the world.

One of the descendants of Babur, Aurangzeb, protected the diamond diligently and passed it on to his heirs.

Mahamad, the grandson of Aurangzeb, however, was not a fear-inspiring and great ruler like his grandfather.

### **Nadir and Mahamad**

The Persian general Nadir Shah went to India in 1739. He wanted to conquer the throne, which had been weakened during the reign of Sultan Mahamad. The Sultan lost the decisive battle and had to surrender to Nadir. It was him the one that gave the diamond its current name, Koh-i-noor meaning "Mountain of light". But Nadir Shah did not live for long, because in 1747 he was assassinated and the diamond got to one of his generals, Ahmad Shah Durrani.

A descendant of Ahmad Shah, Shah Shuja Durrani brought the Koh-i-noor back to India in 1813 and gave it to Ranjit Singh (the founder of the Sikh Empire). In exchange Ranjit Singh helped



Shah Shuja get back the throne of Afghanistan.

#### **The controversy**

The 20th century saw a war of words over Koh-i-noor and its rightful ownership. In 1947, the government of India asked for the return of the diamond. Also, the Congress Ministry which ruled Orissa staked claim to the stone, saying it belonged to the Lord Jagannath. Ranjit Singh's treasurer mentioned that it was the property of their estate. Pakistan's claim to the diamond was disputed by India. Shortly thereafter, a major newspaper in Teheran stated that the gem should be returned to Iran. Sir Olaf has pointed out that the Koh-i-noor had been in Mogul possession in Delhi for 213 years, in Afghan possession in Kandahar and Kabul for 66 years and in British possession for 127 years. Historically, it may be difficult to pass judgment on the validity of the various claims, but on the other hand, from a gemological aspect, as a paper report said, the Indian claim is the most valid because it was in that country that it was mined.

#### **Conclusion**

According to all references, Koh-i-noor was never that great to look at in its early days. It was just another diamond that was dull, non-sparkling and a little yellow in appearance. The Kohinoor is one of the oldest and most famous diamonds in the world. The history of the Kohinoor goes back in history to more than 5000 years ago. Sir Olaf has pointed out that the Koh-i-noor had been in Mogul possession in Delhi for 213 years, in Afghan possession in Kandahar and Kabul for 66 years and in British possession for 127 years. Historically, it may be difficult to pass judgment on the

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#### **References:**

Disclaimer : the above information has been gathered from number of articles on 'Koh -i-noor', some of the sources are stated below.)

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