

After Queen Elizabeth II's Death, Many Indians Are Demanding the Return of the Kohinoor Diamond

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Shortly after British monarch Queen Elizabeth II passed away on Sept. 8, the word “Kohinoor” began trending on Indian Twitter.

It was a reference to one of the world’s most famous gems. The Kohinoor diamond is just one of 2,800 stones set in the crown made for Elizabeth’s mother, known as the Queen Mother—but the 105-carat oval-shaped brilliant is the proverbial jewel in the crown.

In India, it is notorious for the way in which it was acquired by the British.

The history of the Kohinoor

When it was mined in what is now modern-day Andhra Pradesh, during the Kakatiyan dynasty of the 12th-14th centuries, it was believed to have been 793 carats uncut. The earliest record of its possession puts it in the hands of Mughals in the 16th century. Then the Persians seized it, and then the Afghans.

The Sikh Maharajah, Ranjit Singh, brought it back to India after taking it from Afghan leader Shah Shujah Durrani. It was then acquired by the British during the annexation of Punjab. The East India Company got hold of the stone in the late 1840s, after forcing the 10-year-old Maharajah Dunjeep Singh to surrender his lands and possessions.

The company then presented the gem to Queen Victoria. Prince Albert, her consort, asked for it to be recut and it was set in the crowns of Queen Alexandra and Queen Mary before being placed in the Queen Mother’s crown in 1937.

The Queen Mother wore part of the crown at her daughter’s coronation in 1953. The Kohinoor has been among the British crown jewels since then, but governments in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India have all laid claim to the diamond.



Britain's controversial possession of the Kohinoor diamond

While no plans for the future of the gem have been disclosed, the prospect of it remaining in the U.K. has prompted many Twitter users in India to demand its return.

"If the King is not going to wear Kohinoor, give it back," wrote one.

Another said the diamond "was stolen" by the British, who "created wealth" from "death," "famine" and "looting."

It is not the first time that the diamond's return has been sought. Upon India's independence in 1947, the government asked for the diamond back. India made another demand in the year of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation. These demands fell on deaf ears, with the U.K. arguing that there are no legal grounds for the Kohinoor's restitution to India.

British-Indian author and political commentator Saurav Dutt says the chances of the U.K. returning the jewel are slim.

Vocabulary questions:

Match each word to its correct definition.

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|------------------|---|
| 1. Monarch | a) The act of taking control of land or territory, often by force |
| 2. Notorious | b) Official ceremony where a king or queen is crowned |
| 3. Annexation | c) Publicly revealed or announced |
| 4. Seized | d) Famous for something bad |
| 5. Coronation | e) The return of something to its rightful owner |
| 6. Restitution | f) Likelihood or chance of something happening |
| 7. Controversial | g) The state of owning something |
| 8. Disclosed | h) A king or queen |
| 9. Possession | i) Took control of, often by force |
| 10. Prospect | j) Causing disagreement or argument |

Fill in the Blanks Complete the sentences using the following words:

monarch	annexation	possession	controversial	acquired
restitution	disclosed	recut	seized	Prospect
coronation				

1. The diamond was _____ by the British during the _____ of Punjab.
2. The new king will have his _____ next month.
3. The company's plans to build on ancient land have been very _____.
4. The historical document was found in the _____ of a private collector.
5. The museum _____ several rare artifacts from the expedition.
6. After much debate, the country decided not to give _____ for the stolen artwork.
7. The king _____ the neighboring kingdom's land after the war.
8. The gem was _____ to make it more valuable and fit for the royal crown.
9. The company has not yet _____ its plans for next year's production.
10. There is little _____ that the government will return the artifact.

Compression questions- circle the correct answer:

1. How does the passage describe the way the British obtained the Kohinoor diamond?
 - a) Through a peaceful trade agreement
 - b) As part of the annexation of Punjab and by forcing a child Maharajah to surrender his lands and possessions
 - c) Through a diplomatic arrangement with Afghanistan
2. What makes the Kohinoor diamond particularly significant in British crown jewels?
 - a) It is one of the smallest stones in the Queen Mother's crown.
 - b) It was a gift from India to the British Empire.
 - c) Its historical and controversial acquisition, as well as its central position in various crowns worn by British royalty.

3. Why has the Kohinoor diamond been a source of tension between Britain and several other countries?
 - a) Many countries, including India, Iran, and Pakistan, believe the diamond was taken unjustly, and they have laid claims to it based on historical ties.
 - b) It was purchased from the original owners, but they now want it back.
 - c) The British government has plans to auction it, sparking outrage in other nations.
4. What does the author suggest about the likelihood of Britain returning the Kohinoor to India?
 - a) It is highly likely because the U.K. has no legal right to keep the diamond.
 - b) It will depend on the outcome of ongoing legal battles in international courts.
 - c) The chances of the U.K. returning the diamond are slim due to Britain's longstanding resistance to restitution claims.
5. What role did the East India Company play in the transfer of the Kohinoor diamond to Britain?
 - a) The company purchased the diamond from the Maharajah of Punjab.
 - b) The company forced the young Maharajah Dunjeep Singh to surrender it, and then presented it to Queen Victoria as a gift.
 - c) The company found the diamond during an archaeological excavation and brought it to Britain.