



## **CHAPTER FIVE**



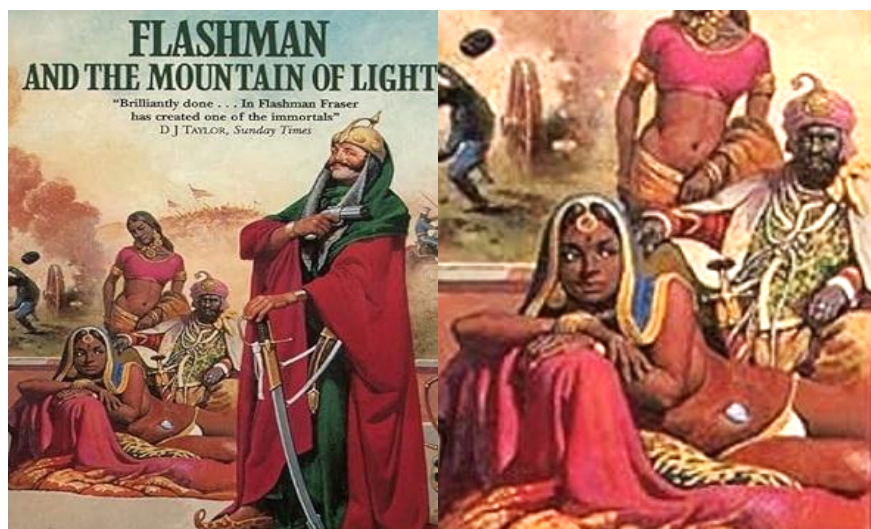
### **Flashman & Legend of the Koh-i-Noor**



**Koh-i-Noor Diamond  
British Royal Crown**

## Chapter 5

OK, now I have to solve *The Riddle of the Koh-i-Noor*. Challenge accepted ! Larry Harry Flashman King, when he was Thomas Hughes created *Flashman*, then '*Flashman and the Mountain of Light*' (Koh-i-Noor means Mountain of Light) became a historic novel-noir. Published in 1969, George MacDonald Fraser adopts anti-hero Flashman's later life for 12 novels, where the school bully becomes an illustrious *Victorian Soldier* while remaining a scoundrel, a liar, a thief, a coward, and above all, a toady. Through a combination of luck and cunning he ends up proclaimed the hero! *The Flashman Papers* are purported to be written by Henry Paget Flashman and discovered in a trunk after his death — AND most readers thought the Flashman Papers were real!



'This 9th volume of *The Flashman Papers*, *The Mountain of Light*, finds that history's most unheroic hero, *Sir Harry Flashman*, is back in India... The British Empire needs a man to satisfy insatiable lust and indulge in ungentlemanly acts; fortunately it has *Harry Flashman*! And with the *Mighty Sikh Army* poised to invade India, our hero is sent by *Her Majesty's Secret Service* to spy on the corrupt *Court of Lahore* on India's Northwest Frontier. Flashy deals with a ravishing Maharani, and her equally sex-hungry maid. He joins forces with adventurers with royal ambitions, and attempts to win the brightest jewel in England's imperial crown, the *Koh-i-Noor Diamond*, at the cost of something he will never miss — namely, his honor.'

Satires tell exaggerated truths depending on their politics, and these were more than a little misogynistic. ***Maharani Jindan Kaur***, is portrayed as the ***Messalina of the Punjab*** with the *Koh-i-Noor* diamond in her bellybutton, deserving of beheading as was *Emperor Claudius*' wife ***Messalina Valeria!***

Now where to begin?...After rickshaw racing from Nathan Road, I was in the Peninsula Hong Kong overlooking the harbor, where in 1978 the water was across the road, and you could board a yacht for lunch, that today is a jungle of steel ingenuity....Dining with *Earle Turow of San Francisco Shirt-works*, he said, "*Leslie, you must go to India, it's the last Frontier*" — Always shopping, I was at the Sausalito Saturday Flea market with *Sandy Swenson*, my partner in contract design for *Star of India*. We were both previously Corporate, she with *Esprit*, and I with New York firms like *Crazy Horse*, and then in San Francisco, all Asian made *Tami Sportswear*. At Marin's Saturday Sausalito Flea, the *Library Angel* gave me a book by *Lalla of Kashmir*: '*Wander my poor soul, you are not going home anytime soon*' ....then echoing in my head, '***India – India***'.



After Tokyo and Hong Kong shopping stops, we arrived in New Delhi on Jan.18,1979. ( *Sting* was chatting with us at breakfast in the Keio Plaza. '*What are you doing in Tokyo?*' we asked. '*I'm with The Police*' he replied. '*Dum da dum dum*' we hummed under our breaths — because we didn't realize who *The Police* were until we saw the road crew in the lobby! ) We arrived in the thick fog that is Delhi in January, into a metal domed airport hangar. Outside, the hangar was encircled with bronze skin natives, blanket-ed in woolen shawls and head scarves, playing music from their scratchy electronics, blowing smoke from bidi cigarettes, and for the first time in my life, I exhaled with a sigh of relief —***somehow I knew, I was finally home!***

We stayed at the *Taj Mansingh* that night, as the *Maurya Sheraton*, in the 'Green Zone', a stones throw from the US and British Embassies, was filled to capacity with a Diplomatic Conference. Then to *The Oberois* for lunch, and *Lodhi Gardens* for tea, keeping the 1940's era Ambassador Taxi with our *bearded-turbaned Sardarji* driver waiting. Across from the gardens is *The Dalai Lama's Charitable Trust*, and we went down the marble steps to the basement to see carpets. Sweet Tibetan faces greeted us, "*We've been waiting for you Leslie*". ( Hmm — they knew my name, that was curious! ) As it was now 5:00 pm tea time, we went to the ***Imperial Hotel***, just down Janpath Road from Parliament, that had served as *Queen Victoria's Diplomatic Guest House*.



The glass encapsulated *Garden Party* restaurant opens to a lawn bordered with ten foot dahlias, and royal palms that touch the sky. We took a table on the lawn. And as the table was set with a cozied pot, assorted silverware and their famous muffins, stepping down from the canopied terrace was a 6'4" adonis, a fair haired man in riding gear, and a turban, business-attire Sardarji. They sat ten feet away at the next table on the lawn. No sooner had our tea been poured, when a swarm of blackbirds swooped down bursting our table-ware to shambles! That broke the silence, and how I formally met Spanish designer *Julio Peralta*. He was the informal Mayor of Delhi for the Designer and Diplomatic community. In those days there were only three international lines in the entire country, one being at the *Imperial Hotel*. Nine hours ahead of New York, this was the ritual time to send and receive telexes, and meet everyone who was in town... Comfortably checked into Maurya's, the phone

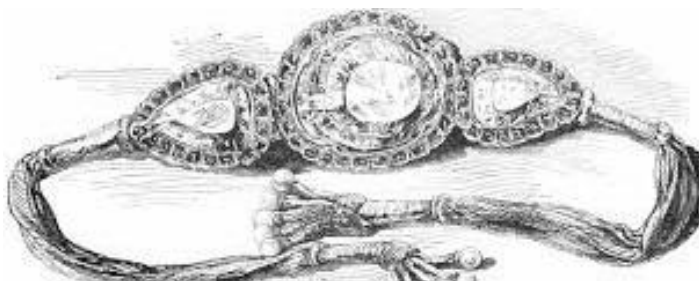
rang. It was Julio and Jericho, who were sweaty from their *Polo match*, and wanted to use my bath. Showered clean, they joined me downstairs at the Coffee Shop. We ordered drinks, when gliding across white marble floors, with ebony silken flowing hair, was the most gracefully beautiful female I'd ever seen, followed by her Ayah carrying a young child. She came directly to our table – she was Julio's wife Jaya! Her son wanted to climb onto her lap, "*Don't sit on Mummy*" she said, "*My nails are still wet!*" An angel with long red fingernails, Jaya and I stayed up all night talking under the stars. At her house in Sainik Farms the next day, her cook Rambir served lunch, when I met her young *Swami, Rajneesh Agarwal*, of the Mumbai Agarwal Industrial family. An exceptionally beautiful young man, his mother was a Bollywood film star who had died tragically. His Master was *Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh*, today known as *Osho*.

As dusk enveloped Delhi, the fragrance of night-queen filled the air, while we strolled around *Qutub Minar*, the 900 year old iron tower that doesn't rust. The light emanating from the young Swami's head attracted a swarm of flying critters, and looked like a *jeweled turbaned crown*. That night I had the wildest dreams, floating above the pines in Goa, with his Master, *Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh*, a man I'd never seen or heard of. This was years before Rajneesh became famous in the 80s for his hundred Rolls Royces and his Commune in Oregon, long before the *Netflix 2018 documentary "Wild-Wild Country"*. — Then 25 years later, there I was sitting alone on a cushion under the dome in his New Delhi Ashram, transfixed, looking at Osho's six foot photo, my first time there. Suddenly the sky became gray and crackled with electricity. That's when the Universe whispered in my head, "***We are with you every step of the way***". And then, the skies cleared...That was 2003, my last trip to India.



The Koh I Noor Diamond

Now it was 2007 and I was listening to voices, solving ***The Riddle of the Sphinx*** and ***The Riddle of The Koh-I-Noor Diamond***, currently set in Queen Elizabeth's State crown. The Legend says: *'He who owns the Koh-i-Noor diamond will own the world, but will also know all its misfortunes. Only God or a woman can wear it with impunity.'* Some legends claim the Koh-i-Noor is dated to 3,000 BC. Others say that Lord Krishna wore it in his arm-band in the epic battle of *'Good over Evil'*. History of the diamond begins when the Central Asian Turks invaded North India in the 12th-13th century establishing the Delhi Sultanate.



**Koh-i-noor Armband of Sikh Emperor Ranjit Singh**

***....The world's only source of diamonds was India, until 1725 when diamond mines were discovered in Brazil.*** Although *Koh-i-Noor's* exact origins are lost to the mists of time, it's believed to have been sifted from the alluvial mines of the Krishna River, in the Golconda Sultanate about the 13th century. In 1304 it was in the possession of the Khilji Delhi Sultanate. In 1536 it's mentioned in Emperor Babur's diary when he defeated Ibrahim Lodhi in the Battle of Panipat. In 1628 Babur's great great grandson Shah Jahan had commissioned the *Taj Mahal* and encrusted his *Peacock Throne* with the *Timur Ruby* and *Koh-i-Noor Diamond*. The wealthy prosperity of the Mughal Empire attracted invaders, and Persia's Nadir Shah invaded Delhi in 1739 killing thousands. Along with the Peacock Throne, Nadir left India with so much loot that it required 700 elephants, 4000 camels and 12,000 horses to carry it all, wearing both the *Timur Ruby* and *Koh-i-Noor Diamond* on his arm. Nadir Shah was beheaded and the diamond was next in the hands of Ahmad Shah Durrani, founder of the *Afghan Durrani Dynasty*. For 70 years, it passed between the bloodsoaked rulers, blinding one and coronating another in molten gold, passing into Shah Zaman's hands. But his power

waned when he was thwarted from plundering India, and the gates of Kabul were closed to the King. He was thrown into a dungeon and blinded with a hot needle, yet he managed to dig a hole into the wall with his dagger, to hide the *Koh-i-Noor*. Three years later, when sectarian violence broke out in Kabul, Zaman's younger brother *Shah Shuja Durrani* took power. To punish those who blinded his brother, he filled the culprit's mouth with gunpowder and blew him up, after watching his wife and children blown out of a cannon!

By 1809 Shuja's power was lost, and he sought out allies in Kashmir to help regain his throne, while sending his wife *Wa'fa Begum* to the protection of **Lahore's Sikh Maharaja Ranjit Singh**. Instead, the Kashmiri allies imprisoned Shah Shuja, insisting on getting the *Koh-i-Noor*. Wa'fa Begum promised the diamond to Ranjit Singh, if he would rescue her husband from prison. Ranjit coveted the *Koh-i-Noor* beyond all else. Breaking the laws of hospitality, he rescued Shuja then put him under house arrest, pressuring him to fulfill his wife's promise, even torturing Shuja's son to get it. Then in 1813, a deal was finally made, and the *Koh-i-Noor* was in Ranjit Singh's possession, where it stayed until his death in 1839.



On his deathbed, the Great Maharaja bequeathed gems and gifts, ordering that the *Koh-i-Noor* be gifted to the Jagannath Hindu Temple in Orissa, on the Easternmost coast of India. The Maharaja wanted to restore the stone to its rightful owner, as Lord Jagannath was another form of Lord Krishna. But his treasurer Beli Ram insisted the *Koh-i-Noor* was state property and it belonged to his son and heir *Kharak Singh*. Ranjit Singh died in June 1839.

Months later, October 1839, the new emperor *Kharak Singh* was overthrown in a coup by his *Prime Minister, Wazir Dhian Singh Dogra*. Somehow the minister's brother, *The Jammu-Fox, Gulab Singh Dogra*, came into possession of the *Koh-i-Noor*. *Kharak* was slowly poisoned, and died in November 1840, followed by the death of his son *Nau Nihal*, while leaving the funeral. *Chand Kaur*, wife of *Kharak* and mother of *Nau Nihal*, fought for the throne against *Raja Shere Singh*, another purported heir. A peace was brokered by *Dhian*, but soon after, *Chand's* head was bashed in by her maid-servants, who were all banished with their tongues cut out!



**Gulab Singh Dogra**

Gulab then presented the diamond to the new *Emperor Shere Singh* to win his favor. But three years later on September 15, 1843, *Shere Singh* and *Dhian Singh Dogra* were both *assassinated!* The next day *Dhian's* 24 year old son *Hira* killed the assassins, succeeding his father as *Wazir*, (Prime Minister), and installed *Ranjit Singh's* last son, 5 year old *Duleep Singh*, as *Emperor*. *Duleep* with his mother *Empress Jindan Kaur* had then resided in *Jammu*, under guardianship of *Suchet Singh Dogra*, and governed by *Gulab Singh Dogra*. The *Koh-i-Noor* armlet was fastened to the child emperor at the Court of *Lahore*. Since the Great *Maharaja's* death, the *Khalsa Army* was in charge, extorting each ascendant for higher pay, while their numbers grew from 80,000 to 120,000.

Then fifteen months later, December 1844, Hira Singh Dogra was assassinated fleeing with loot. Six months after Hira, Rani Jindan's brother *Jawahar* became Wazir in May 1845. Then four months later on September 21, 1845 he was murdered, while riding an elephant and holding Duleep, with Rani Jindan watching from her elephant just behind.

Months later, December 21, 1845, with *Raja Lal Singh* now as Wazir, the *1st Anglo-Sikh War* began. It ended in March 1846 putting in charge *The British Resident*. The Lahore Durbar was ordered to pay an indemnity of 15 million rupees, and as it could not raise the funds, it ceded Kashmir, which was purchased by *Gulab Singh Dogra*, with of course, *the stolen loot!*

In February 1847, accused of conspiracy against *The Resident*, Jindan was imprisoned and exiled, leaving nine year old Duleep in British control under the guardianship of Christian Protestants, *Dr. John Login* and his wife *Lena*. Lord Dalhousie wrote to Foreign Secretary Palmerston: ***'Having watched the defiant Maharani's conduct over these years, I'm of the opinion she is the only person of manly understanding in the Punjab — She is worth all the soldiers in the state put together, for the purpose of mischief.'*** They then launched a smear campaign painting her as the ***'Messalina of the Punjab'***, a seductress too rebellious to control. So great was the impact of her exile on the populace, even though they relentlessly defamed her as a profligate woman, it did not have the desired effect.

Resident Lawrence Sahib received ***'Three Letters of Maharani Jindan Kaur'***: *'You have not done justice to me! You ought to have instituted an inquiry, and then charged me. You ought not to act on what traitors told you.— You have kept no regard for the friendship of the Great Maharaja, you have caused me to be disgraced....Myself, the Maharaja, and 22 maid servants are imprisoned in the Samman Burj. We are in a very helpless condition, even water and food are not allowed to come in. Now that you persecute us in this way, better to hang us.— Even the fixed allowance of one lakh fifty thousand has not been paid by anybody. — Having sold my ornaments I have managed to live on. The Maharaja came to me today and wept bitterly, he said that Bishan and Gulab Singh had been frighten*

-ing him... The treatment meted out to us has not been given to any ruling house. — **Why do you take control of the Kingdom by underhanded means - why don't you do it openly?** — Preserve three or four Traitors and put the whole of Punjab to the sword at their bidding.'

From Samman, Jindan is sent to Sheikhpura Fort *without her son*:  
**'You have snatched my son from me.** You could have kept me in prison, dismissed my men, turned out my maid servants, but you should not have separated my son from me. In the name of the God you worship, the King whose salt you eat, restore my son to me. I cannot bear the pain of this separation. Instead of this you should put me to death. He has no brother or sister, his father he has lost, to whose care has he been entrusted?'



Shalimar Gardens, Lahore

Months later Jindan replies to the Resident's letter: *'I'm glad to learn from your letter that the Maharaja is happy. But my mind does not believe he can be happy. Weeping he was torn from his mother and taken to Shalimar Garden, while his mother was dragged out by her hair.'* After the incident the young Duleep said, **"At least they let me keep my toy."**

Suspected of aiding disaffected Sikhs, security tightened. Her stipend was reduced from 150,000 rupees, to 48,000 rupees, her jewels confiscated and with a military escort was taken to Chunar Fort. Then from the maximum security Chunar Fort, on the rocky banks of the Ganges River, her escape in April 1849 astonished the British, who found a letter written by the Rani.



**Chunar Fort on the Ganges**

Scattering coins on the floor of her cell with notes to be found: ***'You put me in a cage and locked me up, for all your locks and sentries I got out by my own magic... I told you not to push me too hard — but don't think that I ran away, understand well, that I escaped myself unaided....When I quitted the Fort of Chunar, I threw down two papers on my gaddi (seat) and one I threw on the European charpoy (bed). Now don't imagine I got out like a thief.'*** <https://archive.org/details/ThreeLettersOfMaharaniJindKaurDr.GandaSingh>

Jindan always kept her face veiled, hidden from Europeans, so while wearing the clothes of her seamstress, she calmly walked out of the prison to meet her supporters waiting on the river. Dressed as a *fakir* (ascetic) she trekked 800 miles to Nepal, where she was given sanctuary by Ranjit Singh's ally, *Prime Minister Jung Bahadur*, who was pressured by the British to keep a tight security on the Rani. Nevertheless, Jindan managed to convey messages of support, with hidden stashes of money and jewels to hock, well into the *2nd Anglo-Sikh War*.

The *2nd Anglo-Sikh War* began in April 1848 after the murder of two British officers, and the country broke out into a rebellion. That war ended eleven months later in March 1849, with the British formally annexing *The Kingdom of Punjab*, divesting the young Maharaja of his crown, and confiscating by treaty the *Koh-i-Noor diamond* as a 'spoil of war'. The '*Treaty of Lahore*' was ratified by Governor General Lord Dalhousie and signed by the 10 year old *Emperor Duleep Singh*.

In February 1850 the ex-king was removed from his ancestral lands by a military escort to reach Fatehgarh cantonment under the guardianship of Dr. Login and his wife. Login needed to refurbish the house assigned by the *East India Company* as his residence, who wrote: *'The Maharaja says I am his Ma-Bap and trusts me to do what is necessary for his happiness. As far as I can tell, he has no desire to communicate with his mother, who is under house arrest in Nepal.'*



**Submission of Maharaja Duleep after 1st Anglo-Sikh War 1846**

He went on daily rides with his high stepping horse, a hawk on an out-stretched wrist, with his British new best friend Tommy Scott, a Christian. There were a variety of restrictions between Natives and Christians. He could not take tea with Tommy, and since Duleep was being tutored by a native convert, he soon desired to receive baptism.

By 1854, the 16 year old Duleep was now being exiled to Britain. Lord Dalhousie, who had dethroned and confiscated his riches, gave him a farewell. *'I ask you before we part to accept from me this volume, as the best of all gifts. Since in it alone is to be found the secret of real happiness, either in this world, or that which is to come.'* **...After Annexing India's wealthiest Kingdom, Lord Dalhousie gave young Maharaja Duleep, a leatherbound Bible!**

Meanwhile, the *Koh-i-Noor* diamond was presented to Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace July 3, 1850 by a deputy of the *East India Company*. In 1851, *The Great Exhibition* was staged in London's Hyde Park represent-



**The Great Exhibition 1851**

ing the Empire's might, where the *Koh-i-Noor* took pride of place. The public response was *underwhelming*, no matter how the display was changed. So in 1852, *Garrads* the royal jewelers, under the supervision of *Prince Albert* and the *Duke of Wellington*, cut the 191 carat stone to enhance its brilliance, down to 105 carats!

In her journal ***Queen Victoria*** made many entries concerning the exotic young Maharaja. *'He is extremely handsome & speaks English perfectly. The Maharaja sat next to me & is extremely pleasing, sensible & refined in his manner. His young face is indeed beautiful & one regrets that his peculiar headdress hides so much of it.'* She at once decided that he must be painted by her favorite artist *Winterhalter*, who was in London at the time. During the first sitting the Queen drew Lena Login aside, and asked in a low voice if the Maharaja had asked about the *Koh-i-Noor* now reduced to half its size. Mrs. Login broached the topic on her ride home with Duleep, making a favorable report back to the Queen.

On their next sitting the Queen cried out, ***"Maharaja, I have something to show you"***. He turned and found he was holding the *Koh-i-Noor*. Walking over to the open window, examining the diamond in the light, turning and turning the stone once more in his possession, it was excruciatingly tense for all. Her Majesty watched him with sympathy, and not a little bit of anxiety. After a profound inner struggle, so many memories racing through his head, at last he moved to where Her Majesty was standing and said:

***'It is to me Ma'am, the greatest pleasure thus, to have the opportunity, as a loyal subject, of myself tendering to my Sovereign the Koh-i-Noor.'***



**Maharaja Duleep Singh**

Wow – what a story! Such a bloody history. But as far as the ***Riddle of the Koh-i-Noor*** is concerned, it's quite simple. ***Diamonds were only in India.*** There were no other diamonds in the world before 1725 when they were discovered in Brazil. In 1813 *The Great Maharaja Ranjit Singh* got Lord Krishna's diamond back to India, then in 1839 he bequeathed it to Lord Krishna's Jagannath Temple...So if a *Picasso* is stolen from Spain by an Italian, and he loses it to a Frenchman, who then loses it to a German, it's still *a stolen Picasso*. *Logical!* ...OK – so I've accepted the challenge, I've followed all the clues, delved into '*The Riddle of the Sphinx*', and '*The Riddle of Flashman & the Koh-i-Noor*', but the riddle that still remained, what I didn't yet get was, ***just what was my singing Sphinx after?!***

That night my dreams were more intense than being pregnant in Cairo's Citadel, tricked into believing Ali was dead, and staring at a brass tray, with a dagger and a ball of opium set upon it!...To say I was unsettled is an understatement. — It was like there was a boulder on my heart, while my foot was revving the engine to the floor. — No escape was possible! Incessant memories flooded my being, and I awoke knowing, *without a shadow of a doubt*, that I was ***The Last Maharani of Lahore — that I was Jindan.....and I had the eerie feeling that more proofs were soon to unfold !***