



CHAPTER FIVE



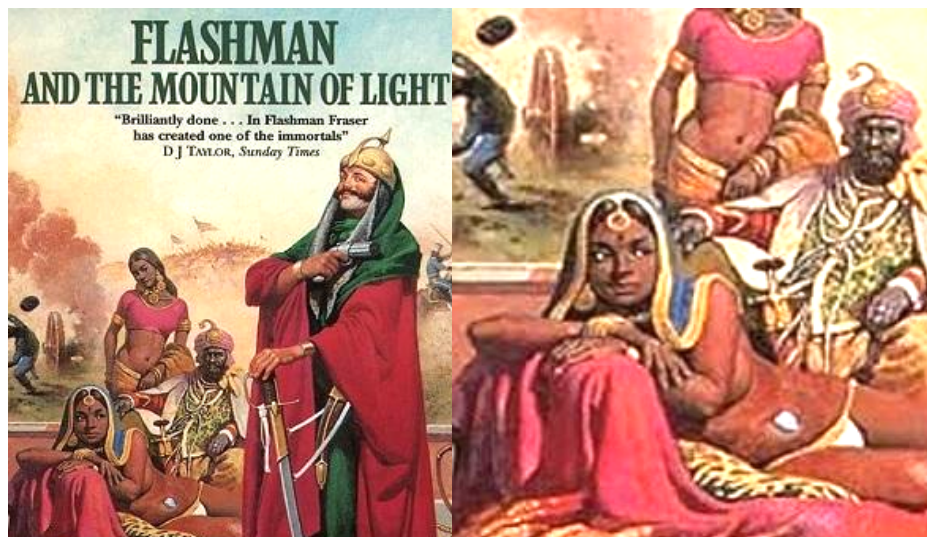
Flashman & Legend of the Koh-i-Noor



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

Chapter 5

...OK, so now I have to solve ***The Riddle of the Koh-i-Noor***. Challenge accepted! ... Larry 'Harry Flashman' King, when he was author 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. He portrays ***Maharani Jindan Kaur*** as the ***Messalina of the Punjab*** with the *Koh-i-Noor* diamond in her bellybutton, worthy 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 *Victoria Harbor*, where in 1978 the harbor was across the road, and you could board a yacht for lunch; that today is a jungle of steel ingenuity. Dining with the very suave *Earle Turow of San Francisco Shirtworks*, he said, “*Leslie, you must go to India; it's the last frontier.*” — Always shopping, I was at the *Sausalito Saturday Flea* with *Sandy Swenson*, my partner in contract design for *Star of India*. Previously we were both corporate, she with *Esprit* and I with New York firms like *Crazy Horse* and then in San Francisco, all Asian-made *Tami Sportswear*. At the Saturday Flea, the *Library Angel* gave me a book by 14th-century mystic/poet *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 of Delhi in January, into a metal-domed airplane hangar. Outside the hangar was encircled with bronze-skinned natives, blanketed in woolen shawls and headscarves, playing music from scratchy electronics, blowing smoke from bidi cigarettes, and I exhaled with a sigh of relief—***on a cellular level—somehow I knew I was finally home!***



We stayed at the *Taj Mansingh* that night, as the *Maurya Sheraton*, in the *Green Zone*, a stone's throw from the US and British embassies, was filled to capacity with a diplomatic conference. The next day we went to *Oberois* for lunch and *Lodhi Gardens* for tea—keeping our 1940s-era *Ambassador* taxi with our *bearded-turbaned-Sardarji* driver waiting. ... Across from the gardens is *The Dalai Lama's Charitable Trust*. 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; how curious!) Next we toured the emporiums, *Connaught Circle*, and then the snake-charmer-adorned, incense-infused curio shops on *Janpath Road*. Strolling along with the tourists, an exceedingly large Sardarji approached me with a smile. He spoke no English but scratched on a notepad, with barely comprehensible inverted letters: my name, my phone number, and my mother’s name. ...*Hmm, very impressive! — Clearly, we were not in Kansas anymore.*

As it was now 5:00 pm tea time, we went to ***The Imperial Hotel***. Just down *Janpath Road* from *Parliament*, which during the *British Raj* served as *Queen Victoria's Diplomatic Guest House*. ...The glass-encapsulated



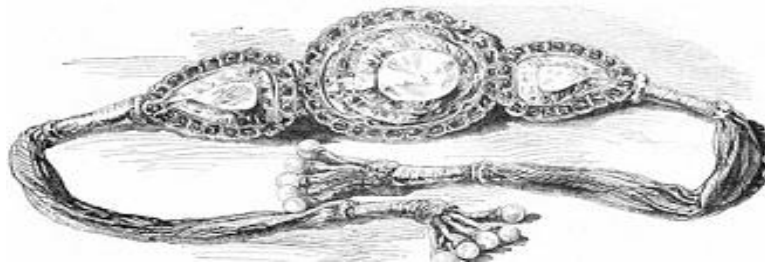
Garden Party restaurant opens onto a lawn bordered with ten-foot dahlias and royal palms that kiss the sky. We sat at a table on the lawn. The table was set with a cozied pot, assorted silverware and their famous muffins. When stepping down from the canopied terrace were a 6 ft 4” Adonis, a fair-haired man in riding gear, and a turban-business-attired Sardarji. They sat ten feet away at the next table on the lawn. No sooner had tea been poured than a swarm of blackbirds swooped down, bursting our tableware into

shambles! That broke the silence, and how I 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, it was the ritual time to send 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 needed my bath. —Showered clean, they joined me downstairs at the coffee shop. We ordered drinks when gliding across the marble lobby floors, with ebony-silken-flowing hair, was the most gracefully beautiful female I'd ever seen. Following her was an 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. The next day at her Sainik Farms house, her cook Rambir served lunch when I met her young *Swami, Rajneesh Agarwal*, of the *Mumbai Agarwal Industrial family*. A beautiful young man, his mother was a *Bollywood film star* who had died tragically. His master was *Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh*, who today is known as *Osho*. ...As dusk engulfed Delhi, the fragrance of night-queen filled the air as we strolled around *Qutub Minar* with its 1,600-year-old iron tower that doesn't rust. We laughed like children as the light emanating from the Swami's head attracted flying critters, forming a *jeweled-turbaned-crown!* ... That night I had the wildest dreams, floating above the pines in Goa with his master, 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 Oregon commune, 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, my first time there. Transfixed, I sat before Osho's six-foot photo. Suddenly the sky turned 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 in 2003, my last trip to India. And in 2007, I was listening to voices, and solving ***The Riddle of the Koh-i-Noor Diamond***, currently set in Queen Elizabeth II's State crown.



The Koh-i-Noor Diamond

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 armband in the epic battle of *'Good over Evil.'* The recorded history of the diamond begins when the Central Asian Turks invaded North India in the 12th-13th century, founding 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*, in 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 next the diamond was in the hands of *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, founder of the *Afghan Durrani Dynasty*. For 70 years, it passed between the blood-soaked rulers, blinding one ruler and coronating another in molten gold, before passing into *Shah Zaman's* hands. But his power waned when he was thwarted from plundering India, and so Kabul's gates were closed to the king. Zaman was thrown into a dungeon and blinded with a hot needle, but he dug a deep hole into the wall with his dagger to hide the *Koh-i-Noor*. Three years later, sectarian violence broke out in Kabul, and his 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 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 locked up 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. And 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 was 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/heir, *Kharak Singh*. Ranjit Singh died in June and just months later, in October 1839, the new emperor *Kharak Singh*, was overthrown in a coup by his *prime minister*, *Wazir Dhian Singh Dogra*. Slowly poisoned, *Kharak* died a year later 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 maidservants, who were all banished with their tongues cut out!



Gulab Singh Dogra

Somehow, by means fair or foul, the minister's brother, *Gulab Singh Dogra*, *The Jammu-Fox*, came into possession of the *Koh-i-Noor*. Gulab 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*, as emperor, with his mother, empress *Jindan Kaur*. Until then she had lived in Jammu, ruled by Gulab Singh, but under the guardianship of *Suchet Singh Dogra*, the youngest of the brothers. The *Koh-i-Noor* armlet was fastened to the child emperor at the Court of Lahore. Since the death of the Great Maharaja, the Khalsa Army was in charge, extorting each ascendant for higher pay, as their numbers grew from 80,000 to 120,000.

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

Months later, on 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. As it could not raise the funds, it ceded Kashmir, which was purchased by *Gulab Singh Dogra*, with, of course, *the stolen loot!*

In August 1847, accused of conspiracy against *the Resident*, the British imprisoned and exiled Jindan, leaving nine-year-old Duleep under the guardianship of Christian Protestants, *Dr. John Login* and his wife *Lena*. Governor Gen. Lord Dalhousie wrote to Foreign Secretary Palmerston: '*Having watched the defiant Maharani's conduct over the 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.*'

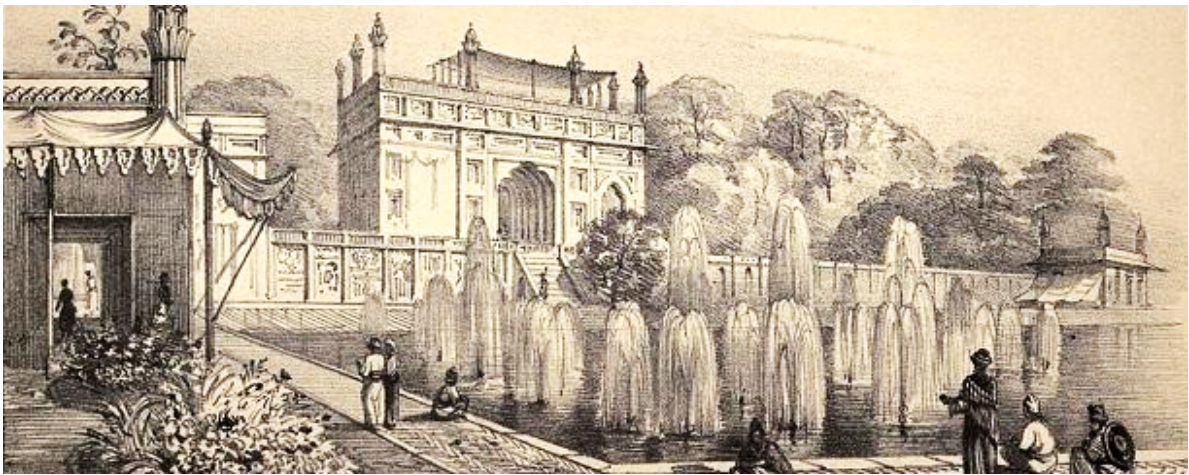
They launched a smear campaign, and named her as the ***Messalina of the Punjab — a seductress too rebellious to control.*** So great was the impact of her exile on the populace that, even though they relentlessly defamed her as a profligate woman, it did not have the desired effect.

Resident Henry Lawrence 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 frightening 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 maidservants, 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."***

Considered the *'rallying point of rebellion'*, suspected of aiding disaffected Sikhs, security tightened. Her stipend was reduced from 150,000 rupees to 48,000 rupees, her jewels were confiscated, and with a military escort, she 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 and was given sanctuary by Ranjit Singh's ally, *Prime Minister Jung Bahadur*. He was pressured by the British to keep tight security on the Rani. But nevertheless, Jindan managed to convey messages of support, with hidden stashes of money and jewels to sell, 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. The 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 by treaty confiscating 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.’



Maharaja Duleep's submission after the 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 being exiled to Britain. Lord Dalhousie, who, having dethroned and confiscated his riches, gave Duleep 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 richest kingdom, Lord Dalhousie gave the young Maharaja Duleep Singh, a leatherbound Bible!

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



The Great Exhibition 1851

empire's might, where the *Koh-i-Noor* took pride of place. ...The public's response was *underwhelming*, no matter how the display was changed. So in 1852, *Garrads*, the royal jewelers, under the supervision of the *Duke of Wellington and Prince Albert*, to enhance its brilliance, they cut down the *191-carat stone 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 just a little anxiety. After a profound inner struggle, with 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. *The Great Maharaja Ranjit Singh* got Lord Krishna's diamond back to India in 1813; then at his death in 1839 he bequeathed it to Lord Krishna's Jagannath Temple. ... So if a *Picasso* is ***stolen*** from *Spain* by an *Italian*, and then it's ***stolen*** by a *Frenchman*, and afterward it's ***stolen*** by a *German*, it's still ***a stolen Picasso — logical!*** ... OK—so I've accepted the challenge. I've followed all the clues, I've delved into *The Riddle of the Sphinx* and *The Riddle of the Koh-i-Noor*. But the riddle that remained, what I didn't yet get, ***was just what my singing Sphinx was 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 then I awoke knowing, *without 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!*