



# RAJA DEEN DAYAL

Artist-Photographer in 19th-Century India

Deepali Dewan and Deborah Hutton



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Albumen Print, Photographer's Ref. 8922, 297 x 229 mm (fig. 99)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has had a long gestation period. It started when both of us were in graduate school and wrote papers on Deen Dayal. Deborah Hutton's interest in Dayal's photographs stemmed from her work on the Deccan, specifically the role of the visual arts in the articulation of courtly and elite identities. Deepali Dewan's interest was the medium of photography, its use in the production of art historical knowledge and its intersection with South Asian modernity. After graduating and getting jobs in the field, we were struck by the continued absence of any scholarly book-length writing on Dayal. It was Deborah's initial urgings that brought us together to formally work on filling this gap while at the same time using Dayal's work as a way to deepen understanding about South Asian visual culture. While we had a sense of the breadth and impact of Dayal's output, we were unprepared by the sheer volume of work that survives and the complexity of Dayal's career, particularly as it intersected with South Asia's courtly traditions, colonial politics, and modernity's articulations. Over the course of eight years, this project compelled us to visit numerous archives over three continents. We spent vast amounts of time pouring through boxes of photographic material and pursuing as much primary textual documents as possible in an attempt to get a fuller picture of Dayal's practice, realizing along the way that it would take a life time to fully grasp it all. This is where the collaborative process became indispensable. When time was short, Deborah would visit one archive and Deepali would make the necessary contacts at another, sharing notes and insights with each other later. The same occurred with secondary literature; if one would come across an obscure but helpful reference, it would be immediately shared. But the real impact of the collaborative process was the time we spent *looking* at material together. We were both struck by the incredible depth of observation one was able to achieve in partnership

with another. One insight would lead to another, building upon the last; inversely, claims that were not convincing were quickly discarded. In this way, the book is a collaborative process through and through, to the extent that it is unclear where one author's work starts and the other's ends. While we each author separate chapters, many of the ideas put forth were jointly created.

We are indebted to numerous institutions and individuals that helped us along the way. First and foremost, we would like to express our gratitude to our own institutions, the Royal Ontario Museum and The College of New Jersey, for giving us the intellectual space to pursue this project. The necessary digging for primary sources and tracking down of images could not be done without financial support for repeated trips to India, lengthy stays at archives, and sustained engagement with the body of Dayal's work that survives. For this we are grateful for the generous support provided by the American Institute of Indian Studies, the Alkazi Collection of Photography, the Royal Ontario Museum, and The College of New Jersey.

We are profoundly grateful to the Alkazi Collection of Photography. It was early in the project that our book became part of their series on the history of photography in South Asia, from which point forward we were able to focus on this remarkable archive for the visual material in the book. We can't say enough about the professional attitude and the support we have received from various staff over time: Rahaab Allana, Jennifer Chowdhry, Esa Epstein, Sophie Gordon, Shilpi Goswami, Anita Jacob, Pramod Kumar, Joyoti Roy, Stephanie Roy, Sayuri Rupani, Manuel Schmettau, and Akemi Yoneyama. Also, we would like to extend a special thanks to Mr. Ebrahim Alkazi, without whose vision and





# INTRODUCTION

Deborah Hutton and Deepali Dewan

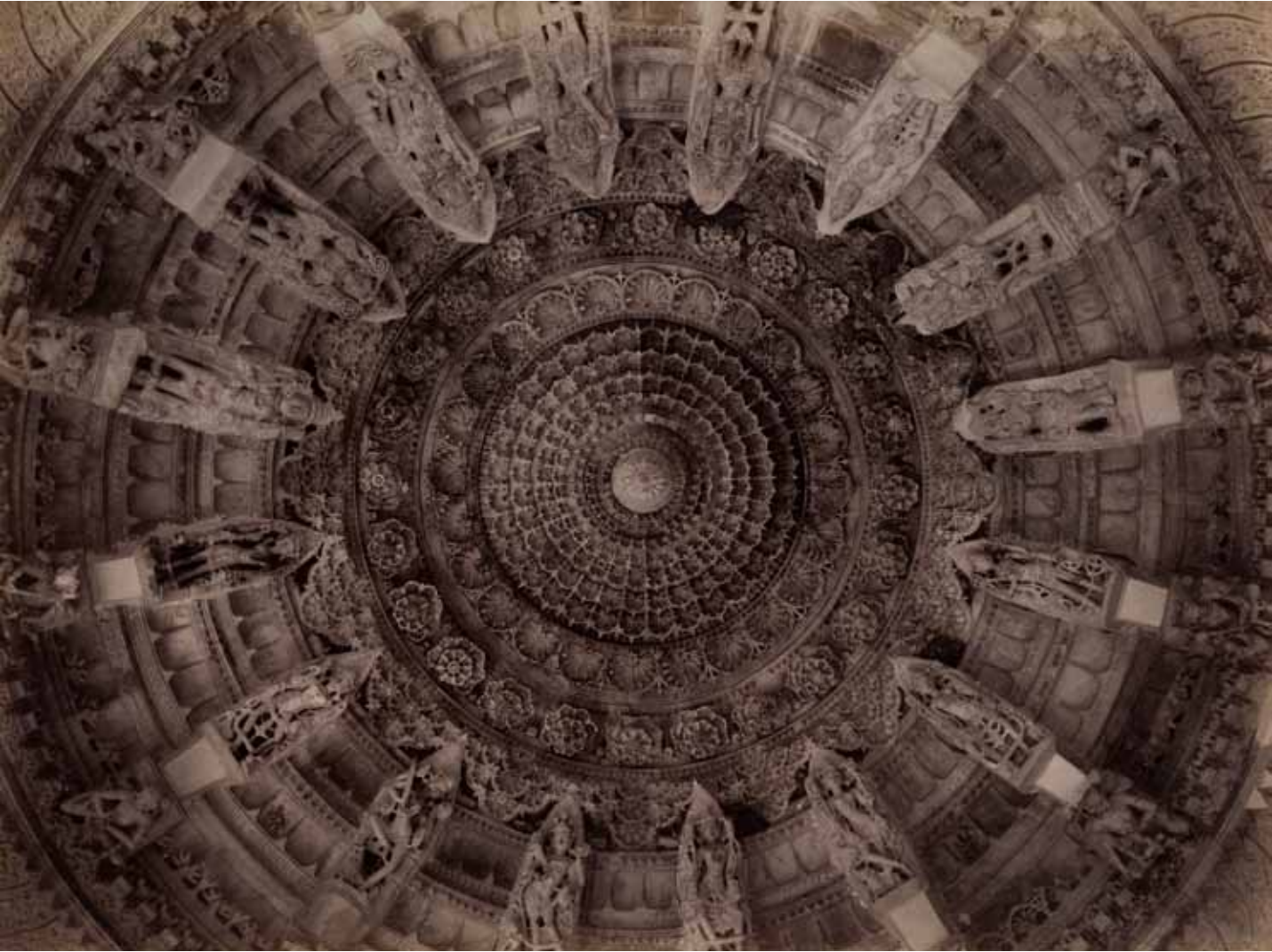


The Myth of Dayal: Rise of an Icon

In 2006, India issued a 500-rupee postage stamp in honour of Raja Deen Dayal (hereafter Dayal) (1844–1905), an action affirming Dayal’s widely acknowledged status as the most celebrated 19th-century Indian photographer (figs. 1-2).<sup>1</sup> The stamp, an honour bestowed upon no other early South Asian photographer, exemplifies the iconic position that Dayal has come to occupy over the past three decades. The name “Dayal” now operates like a brand, signifying success, high artistic quality, and the grandeur of princely India. In many respects, Dayal has become the example of the 19th-century Indian photographer par excellence in popular discourse. In fact, some scholars lament that the emphasis on Dayal has resulted in the virtual neglect of other Indian photographers of the period.<sup>2</sup>

The exalted status Dayal currently holds is not a mere by-product of historical selection: he was regarded as the premiere Indian photographer during his lifetime as well, as newspapers of the time attest. He ran a successful business, and his Indore, Secunderabad, and Bombay studios ranked among the top of the day in terms of size and repute. He had the honour of being appointed photographer to over a dozen high-ranking figures, including Queen Victoria, even though she never visited India and Dayal never left the subcontinent.<sup>3</sup> His photographs won gold medals at various national and international exhibitions. When Dayal died in 1905, his obituary ran in the major national newspapers of the day. The *Bombay Gazette*, in its account of his passing, praised Dayal as “the first great Indian photographer and artist.”<sup>4</sup>

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LALA DEEN DAYAL & SONS, SECUNDERABAD  
Col. D. Robertson, Resident, with group of guests at Sas Bahu [Sahastrabahu] Temple, east of Gwalior Fort, 2 January 1895  
From *Investiture of H.H. The Maharaja Madho Rao Scindia, Gwalior*  
Albumen Print, Photographer’s Ref. 13082, 208 x 299 mm  
ACP: 95.0086(04)



Facing page above  
1 ♦ SANKHA SAMANTA  
Commemorative Stamp of Lala Deen Dayal issued by Department of Posts, Government of India, on 11 November 2006  
Photogravure, 45 x 35 cm each stamp  
Courtesy India Post, Ministry of Communication & Information Technology, Government of India

Facing page below  
2 ♦ E. CRAIG, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER, RAJA DEEN DAYAL & SONS, BOMBAY  
“Raja Bahadur Musavvir Jung” (as per Studio Register), April 1904  
Silver Gelatin Print, Photographer’s Ref. 29643, 133.3 x 95.25 mm  
PEM: PH81.91  
Courtesy of the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts

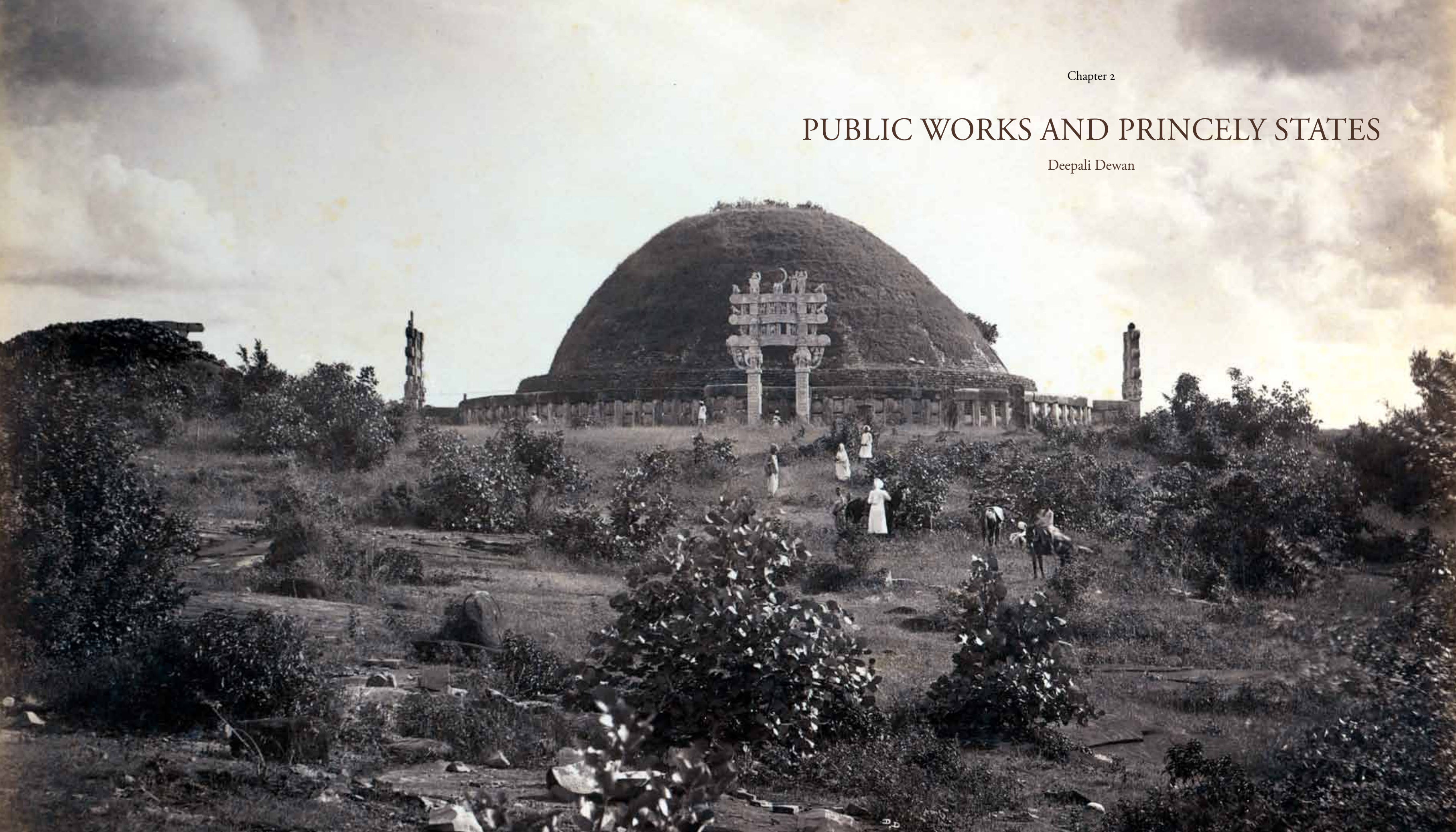
3 ♦ DEEN DAYAL  
Ceiling of Dilwara Temple, Mount Abu, 1882  
Albumen Print, Photographer’s Ref. 1191, 199 x 270 mm  
ACP: 94.09.0002



Chapter 2

# PUBLIC WORKS AND PRINCELY STATES

Deepali Dewan







26 ♦ DEEN DAYAL  
Agent to Governor General’s Ceremonial Meeting (*paishwai*), Bhopal,  
February 1879  
From *Views of Central India*  
Albumen Print, Photographer’s Ref. 131, 126 x 200 mm  
ACP: 98.60.0296(48)

An early photograph from Central India by Deen Dayal shows a line of royal elephants standing against the horizon (fig. 26). Dated to February 1879, the image depicts a ceremonial meeting (*paishwai*) between the Agent to the Governor General and the ruler of Bhopal. The Agent, a political officer of the British Government in India, was involved in a variety of affairs from interstate relations to intelligence-gathering and reported to the Governor General or Viceroy, the highest representative of the British monarchy in India.<sup>1</sup> Bhopal was one of a number of independent states within Central India, a region in the northern area of what is now Madhya Pradesh. Literally and conceptually, the photograph represents the intersection of two worlds—that of the colonial administration and the princely state. Such ceremonial meetings were critical components of the functioning of the Central India Agency, a political unit in which Dayal served as an employee for almost 20 years. They were part of the delicate negotiations that led to the construction and financing of roads, railways and bridges, and the conservation of ancient monuments. All of these made use of the new technology of photography. It is in this context—the space of colonialism, court culture and public works—that Dayal first started practicing the making of photographs, a context integral to shaping his eye as a photographer and the trajectory of his long career.

This chapter explores the early part of Dayal’s career in an attempt to identify the formative moments that came to shape his photographic practice, and so it roughly covers the years from 1864 through 1887. It first examines Dayal’s training at Thomason College at Roorkee, including the principles of surveying that he learned there and how they impacted his early photographic images. Thereafter it examines Dayal’s work in the Public Works Department of the Central India Agency at Indore under Agents Major Henry Daly and Sir Lepel Griffin. The chapter also looks at Dayal’s two-year furlough in 1885–87 that marked his formal transition from an amateur to a professional photographer. The circulation of Dayal’s images long past their initial

production made a lasting impression and still frames the way some of South Asia’s landscape and cultural heritage are seen today. This chapter is ultimately about how the landscape and architecture of South Asia became visualized within a space of public works projects via the technology of photography.

**The Surveyor’s ‘Eye’**

Dayal was born in 1844 and grew up in Sardhana, near Meerut.<sup>2</sup> The youngest child in an established Agarwal Digambar Jain family of jewellers, Dayal entered Thomason Civil Engineering College in 1864 at the age of 20.<sup>3</sup> Thomason College had been set up in 1847 to train Europeans and natives for employment in the public works departments around the country.<sup>4</sup> It was the foremost institution of higher education in engineering at the time and was intended to meet the demand for skilled workers in public works departments.<sup>5</sup> Thomason College was divided into three departments: the first for training civil engineers, the second for European officers (called “upper subordinate class”), and the third for native youths who wanted to learn surveying, levelling and plan-drawing. Dayal was enrolled in the third department, called the “Lower Subordinate Class.” Qualifications for admission to this department were a knowledge of arithmetic “in the Native form” and the ability to read and write Urdu. Students had to be between the ages of 18 and 22, recommended by their schoolmaster or the deputy inspector of their educational district, and possess a certificate of sound health and physical fitness. While instruction was free (at least at first), attending the school was beyond the means of most. Students had to come to Roorkee and support themselves at their own cost.<sup>6</sup> Accommodation was provided at the school barracks at 8 annas per month and the cost of books and instruments was estimated at Rs 60 for the period of instruction. It was a two-year programme with instruction in Urdu on mathematics, civil engineering, surveying, estimating, drawing, experimental science and English.<sup>7</sup> After students graduated, any costs incurred for transportation to

*Previous pages*  
LALA DEEN DAYAL  
General View of Sanchi Tope Looking North, early 1887  
From *Views of Bhopal and Sanchi [Lord Lansdowne Collection]*  
Albumen Print, Photographer’s Ref. 3001, 200 x 264 mm  
ACP: 95.0056(10)



Chapter 3

# VIEWS OF THE NIZAM'S DOMINIONS

Deborah Hutton





On 20 September 1887, the *Deccan Times*, an English-language newspaper published in Hyderabad, ran a short piece announcing Dayal's arrival in the city: "Mr. Lala Deen Dayal, of Indore, Central India, Photographer to H.E. the Viceroy and H.E. the Commander-in-Chief, has, as appears from his advertisement, come to add to his collection some pictures of places of interest in Hyderabad." The piece then goes on to praise the quality and extent of the work included in an album that Dayal himself, always keenly aware of the importance of publicity, had brought to the newspaper's office for review. The brief article ends by asserting that the photographer "is sure to find customers in the cultivated aestheticism of Hyderabad."<sup>1</sup> The author who penned that prediction most likely had no idea how right he was. Dayal not only found customers in the "cultivated aestheticism" of the capital city of the Nizam's Dominions, he went on to achieve unparalleled success there, eventually becoming the official photographer to the Nizam of Hyderabad and proprietor of a commercial studio with a staff of over 50 people.

Hyderabad became Dayal's home base shortly after that first trip in 1887 and remained so until his death in 1905, though he continued to do work in other parts of India and later opened another studio in Bombay. During those nearly 18 years in Hyderabad, Dayal and his staff took thousands of photographs recording events, people, places, and things related to the Nizam's Dominions, ranging from the Nizam's silverware to the "poor houses" set up to care for the victims of the devastating 1899–1900 famine (fig. 7).<sup>2</sup> Dayal extensively photographed the sixth Nizam, Mahbub

Ali Khan (fig. 10), as well as the Nizam's family, his noblemen, and important visitors. Of all Dayal's work in Hyderabad, however, the most successful project, if we measure success in terms of the frequency and duration of reprinting as well as amount of revenue earned by his firm, was unquestionably the very first one Dayal undertook after arriving in the princely state. That project, which the *Deccan Times* characterized as "some pictures of places of interest in Hyderabad," was in fact an extensive photographic account, taken over approximately five months, of notable places throughout the Nizam's Dominions.

This chapter considers Dayal's *Views of the Nizam's Dominions* project, examining its specific extent and content, as well as the evidence and reasons for its success. The analysis begins by reconstructing Dayal's movements during summer 1887 through autumn 1888 in order to better understand the various steps by which such an extensive photographic project was carried out.<sup>3</sup> The chapter then probes the visual image of the Nizam's Dominions created by the highly-prized 100-print photographic album that resulted from the project before looking at some of the other contexts in which the photographs circulated. Ultimately, this chapter posits that the venture proved instrumental to both Dayal's career and the visual identity of the Nizam's Dominions. The project's successful reception set the stage for Dayal's subsequent achievements in the princely state, while the wide circulation and effectiveness of the photographs ensured their roles as potent building blocks of Hyderabad's visual identity.

#### Photographing the Nizam's Dominions

Dayal arrived in Hyderabad fresh from a successful summer in Simla, the hill station that served as the summer capital of British India. While there, Dayal photographed not only Simla's mountainous landscape and British-inspired architecture, but also the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, and the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Frederick Roberts (fig. 8). Dayal's pictures from his time in Simla received much praise in the

press.<sup>4</sup> Dayal was still, at this point, on a two-year furlough from his job at the Central India Agency, a break he had taken with the intention of completing "a photographic tour of India."<sup>5</sup> By September 1887, Dayal had already photographed many of the architectural monuments of north and Central India. Thus, travelling south was the logical next step. Moreover, Hyderabad had much to offer in the way of views of important places as well as potential customers and patrons for his work.

The Nizam's Dominions, the largest and highest ranking of the princely states in colonial India, covered 81,807 square miles, an area only 13 per cent smaller than the entire area currently included in the United Kingdom.<sup>6</sup> The state not only contained the historic cities of Hyderabad and nearby Golconda, both former capitals of the Qutb Shahi dynasty (1518–1687), but it also included the cities of Warangal, Gulbarga and Aurangabad, as well as the celebrated excavated monuments at Ajanta and Ellora. All of these sites were stocked with rich material for a photographer. Additionally, the Nizam of Hyderabad was rumoured to be one of the richest men in the world. He and his nobles lived lavish lifestyles that combined Deccan traditions of kingship and courtly culture with a newly emerging international elite culture in which photography played an important role. The Hyderabad court, thus, could provide Dayal with a potential base of patronage for his images. Furthermore, the city of Secunderabad, founded in 1798 as a garrison for British-employed troops, adjoined the Nizam's capital of Hyderabad. By the late 19th century, Secunderabad had developed into the largest cantonment in India and was flanked by two more cantonments, Bolarum and Trimulgherry.<sup>7</sup> The military had already proved to be one of Dayal's most important customers, and thus the cantonment with thousands of troops housed in these barracks must have been yet another attraction for Dayal. Finally, the timing of Dayal's visit that autumn coincided with two important events, which must have been potent draws as well: the Langar Procession and the Secunderabad Camp of Exercise.

The Langar Procession, a uniquely Hyderabadi event for which the city was well known in the 19th century, occurred on the fifth day of Muharram, which in 1887, fell on Friday, September 23, just a few days after Dayal's arrival.<sup>8</sup> The procession dated back to the 17th century, when, according to tradition, a Qutb Shahi queen made a pledge in the name of the Shia imam, Imam Husayn, for the safe return of her son, Prince Abdullah, who had disappeared while riding a mad elephant. Upon his homecoming, in fulfilment of her vow, the queen delivered a gold *langar*, a massive chain used for anchoring elephants, to the Husayni Alam Ashurkhana in central Hyderabad, where it was broken up and distributed to the poor. Under the rule of the Sunni Asaf Jahis (the dynasty to which the Nizam belonged), the Langar Procession maintained its connection with ensuring the *salamati* or safety of the ruler, but additionally became a military parade, in which the Nizam's regular and irregular troops showed off for the crowds.<sup>9</sup> The procession, with its elephants, camels and soldiers in a wide range of "Mughlai" regalia, also came to symbolize Hyderabad's link to older Indo-Islamic traditions that many observers felt were being forgotten in other parts of India. One visitor to the Nizam's Dominions wrote, "The Lungar [sic] is the greatest holiday of the year in Hyderabad, and the city gives itself up entirely to pleasure. People from the surrounding country swarm into the place by thousands, and the streets are a mass of many-coloured life."<sup>10</sup> Similarly, an article in *The Hindu* from 1894 described the procession as "a spectacle that leaves a very favourable impression on the minds of those that care to witness the occasion."<sup>11</sup> Such a "spectacle" could provide a wealth of picture-taking opportunities for an industrious photographer, a fact of which Dayal would have been keenly aware.<sup>12</sup>

The very first image Dayal took after arriving in Hyderabad was a view of the Afzal Gunj Bridge from the city entrance gate (fig. 45), which bears the negative number 3601. Notably, the next dozen or so images that he produced capture the Langar Procession (negative nos. 3602–3613,

*Previous pages*  
LALA DEEN DAYAL  
Gulbarga Fort, 1888  
From *Views of the H.H. the Nizam's Dominions, Hyderabad. Deccan*, 1888  
Albumen Print, Photographer's Ref. 3902, 127 x 201 mm  
ACP: 95.0063(51)



Chapter 4

# ROYAL AND VICEREGAL ENCOUNTERS

Deepali Dewan





VISIT ALBUMS BY THE DAYAL STUDIO	
1889	Visit of the Duke and Duchess of Connaught to Hyderabad
1889	Visit of Prince Albert Victor to Hyderabad
1890	Visit of the Czarevitch Nicholas II of Russia to Hyderabad
1891	Visit of the Grand Duke Alexander of Russia to Hyderabad
1892	Visit of Viceroy Lord and Lady Lansdowne to Hyderabad
1893	Visit of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria to Hyderabad
1895	Visit of Viceroy Lord and Lady Elgin to Hyderabad
1902	Visit of Viceroy Lord and Lady Curzon to Hyderabad
1903	Visit of the Duke and Duchess of Connaught to Gwalior

*Previous pages*  
LALA DEEN DAYAL  
Reception at the Station [Duke of Connaught surrounded by Duchess of Connaught to the left and Nizam of Hyderabad, Mahbub Mir Ali Khan, to the right], January, 1889  
From *The Royal Visit 1889, Hyderabad Deccan*  
Albumen Print, 195 x 244 mm  
ACP: 98.60.0013(08)

Towards the end of Viceroy Lord Elgin’s visit to Hyderabad in 1895, two photographs were taken of the viceregal party clustered around a table at the Chowmahalla Palace. One shows them looking at the state jewels and the other shows them looking at photographs (fig. 63). These images are similar in composition; their juxtaposition next to each other on the page of the photograph album documenting the visit underscores the common space they occupied as entertainment for elite visitors to the premier princely state of Hyderabad. The act of viewing *in* the photographs was duplicated by the act of viewing the photographs in the album. Such photograph albums documenting official visits (hereafter visit albums) recorded, preserved and created an official narrative of the visit in visual form. The visit album came to constitute a means by which political relationships were made, sealed, and promoted. It demonstrated, among other things, how photography, and the act of viewing it, had become a part of a culture of politics and elite travel around the turn of the century.

By the time the photographs discussed above were produced in 1895, state visits to Hyderabad had become commonplace. Visits by viceroys were part of diplomatic tours that regulated relationships between the British government and the native states. But viceroys were not the only ones to travel between princely states. Foreign royalty as well came to Hyderabad and were received with fanfare. These visits were part of a larger culture of elite travel where royals toured around the globe, combining political networking and entertainment. They also served as a form of acknowledgement, validating the Nizam’s own status as sovereign.<sup>1</sup> In this way, the visit album played a particular role, not only as a document or parting gift (as it often was), but as a political tool and symbol of Hyderabad’s status within colonial politics and in the world.

All the known visit albums dating to the late 19th century for Hyderabad State were produced by the Dayal

Studio, which particularly excelled in their production. This involved capturing the often fleeting images of dignitaries arriving and departing from official functions, coordinating group photographs, printing and assembling the images into an album (usually in a short span of time), and writing the captions. The album of Lord Elgin’s visit was one of nine albums produced by the Dayal Studio between 1889 and 1903, eight of which were for Hyderabad State. All of them follow a similar format and were produced in multiples. This chapter explores the visit album as a collection of individual photographs and as an object in itself. By focusing discussion on the Connaught album (the first album produced by Dayal), group portraits and military reviews from various albums, and the notion of threshold space, this chapter explores the phenomenon of the visit album as a distinctive product of the Dayal Studio, which played a central role in the politics of the Hyderabad court in the last decades of the 19th century.

The State Visit and Colonial Politics

State visits by British dignitaries increased dramatically in the latter half of the 19th century with the enforcement of indirect rule and the consolidation of British power. These visits were one way of maintaining and forging political alliances. While earlier governors-general such as Lord Amherst (1823–28) made extended tours around India, it was Lord Canning (1856–62) who first systematically visited the princely states after 1858 in order to distribute rewards for faithful service during the rebellion.<sup>2</sup> From among the British royalty, the Duke of Edinburgh was the first member of the British royal family to tour India in 1869. The Prince of Wales’s highly publicized tour in 1875–76, in which photography featured centrally, garnered even more attention.<sup>3</sup> As Barbara Ramusack, in her broad and detailed study of the Indian princely states explains, a visit to an individual state by a viceroy or a member of the British royal family was a “highly coveted status symbol.” Individual states arranged special attractions such as sports and hunts for their



63 ♦ RAJA DEEN DAYAL & SONS, SECUNDERABAD  
Viceroy Lord Elgin and Party inspecting Photograph Album of their Visit produced by Raja Deen Dayal & Sons, Secunderabad, November 1895  
From *Souvenir of The Visit of Their Excellencies Lord and Lady Elgin to H. H. The Nizam’s Dominions, November 1895*  
Albumen Print, Photographer’s Ref. 13576, 97.5 x 144 mm  
ROM: 2007.17.17.58  
Photo by Brian Boyle, Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, © ROM

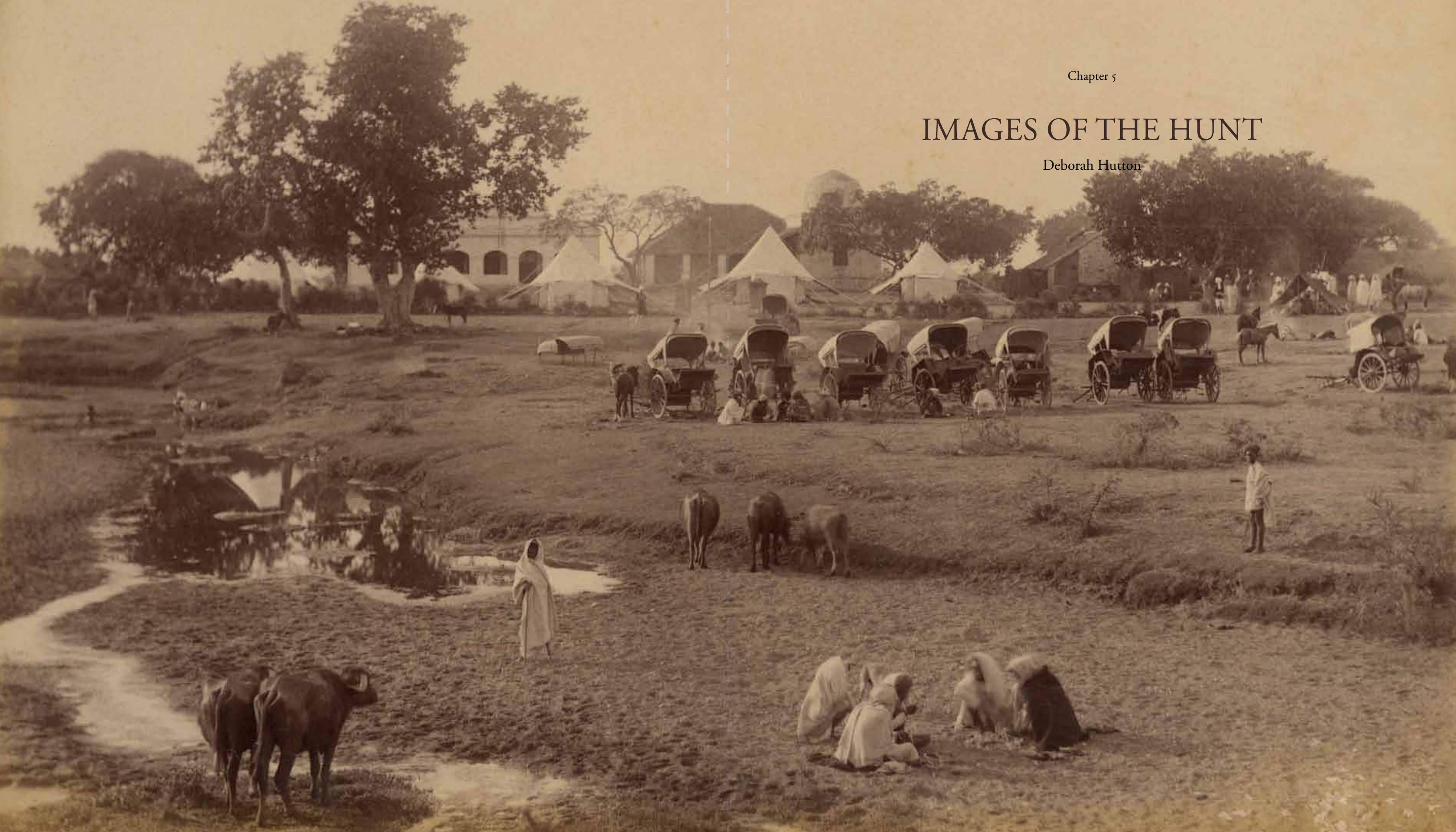
visitors. Even though such staged events were an enormous financial burden, the expense was undertaken because these visits were seen as a sign of imperial favour. At the same time, meetings with Indian princes were a way to emphasize the Viceroy’s own power as well.<sup>4</sup> They allowed the Viceroy to check on British interests in a princely state and assert authority by holding a durbar. Thus, a visit to a princely state was an event that conferred status on both the visitor and the host, as a “relationship... [that] was more complex than a simple paradigm of dominance. It was an interaction that was often mutually beneficial.”<sup>5</sup>



Chapter 5

# IMAGES OF THE HUNT

Deborah Hutton





Late one night in June 1894, Dayal received an urgent summons. The Nizam was on shikar in the Pakhal jungle, where he was having extraordinary success bagging tigers.<sup>1</sup> He wanted the photographer to join him immediately at camp so that his achievements could be recorded. With the assistance of the railway authorities, whom Dayal had to rouse in the middle of the night, the photographer was able to leave Secunderabad station at 2:00 a.m. on a special train that reached Mankota five hours later. He then proceeded directly from the railway station to the royal camp, where he went right to work photographing the Nizam and his kill. Not until two or three o'clock in the afternoon, after what must have been a long, hot, and exhausting night and day for Dayal, did the Nizam think to allow the photographer to rest.<sup>2</sup>

That was not the end of Dayal's hardships on the trip. A few days later, while on an excursion to Pakhal lake, the shikar van (a large wagon drawn by horses), in which Dayal and several others were travelling, toppled over in the middle of the Pakhal river. The van had been moving at a fast pace in order to make it up the steep embankment on the other side, so when one of its front wheels got caught on a rock, it tipped over abruptly into the water. As one newspaper article reported, the accident "pretty nigh cost the Nizam's Doctor, Lalla Deen [*sic*], and three others their valuable lives." Luckily, the water was quite shallow, and after a bit of flailing about, all emerged from the river unhurt; however, scared, soaked, and a bit humiliated, they had to spend the next few hours recovering "in a warm sun and a good breeze."<sup>3</sup>

*Previous pages*  
LALA DEEN DAYAL  
After the Arrival of the Imperial Party, Deogaon Camp, 1890  
From *Excursion to Rozah Album [Visit of HRH Czarevitch to Hyderabad, 1890]*  
Albumen Print, Photographer's Ref. 9420, 208 x 273 mm  
ACP: 95.0089(17)

In the end, the exertion and discomfort Dayal experienced on the trip paid off. The Nizam was so pleased with Dayal's work, which included the oft-printed and reproduced photograph of the Nizam posing with two tigers (fig. 80), that before leaving camp, the ruler proposed a title for the photographer: Musavvir-i Asaf Jahi (Artist of the Asaf Jahis).<sup>4</sup> The Nizam also composed a verse in Urdu in Dayal's honour, which was recorded and translated in the press as follows:

*Ajab yeh karte hain tasvir mein kamaal kamaal*  
*Ustaadon ke hain ustaad Raja Deen Dayal.*  
(In the art of photography, surpassing all,  
The master of masters is Raja Deen Dayal.)<sup>5</sup>

About a month later, at the durbar held in conjunction with the Nizam's birthday, the ruler officially bestowed the title "Raja Bahadur Musavvir Jung" (often translated as Bold Warrior of Photography) on Dayal and



80 ♦ DEEN DAYAL AND UNKNOWN ARTIST  
The Nizam Mahbub Mir Ali Khan of Hyderabad Posed with Tiger  
Trophies, June 1894  
Watercolour on Albumen Print, Photographer's Ref. 12659, unknown size  
CP: 03.8.238  
Courtesy of the Chowmahalla Palace, Hyderabad

appointed him photographer to the Nizam's government at a salary of Rs 600 per month. The Nizam further ordered the salary to be payable retrospectively for six years in honour of the work Dayal had done during that time. The award provided Dayal not only with a major public affirmation of his status, but also a sizeable monetary gain, as was much noted in the local and countrywide press.<sup>6</sup>

For many 21st-century viewers, big game hunting photographs, which seem to display an arrogant disregard for animal conservation as well as an unbridled sense of elite entitlement, are problematic. Yet, as the events recounted above demonstrate, shikar photography was central to Dayal's success in Hyderabad. Travelling with the Nizam on shooting expeditions gave Dayal an opportunity to demonstrate his hard work and loyalty to the ruler in an intimate setting where it could be easily recognized. It was this recognition by the Nizam that directly led to Dayal's appointment as court photographer. Moreover, the hunting photographs that Dayal took of the Nizam as well as the numerous elite guests who visited Hyderabad in the late-19th and early-20th centuries were then, and remain today, some of the most widely reproduced of Dayal's images.

The "appeal" of shikar photographs stems from the unmistakable ways in which they embody the power structures and ruling ideologies of the period. At a time when ceremonial displays of power were being transformed by modern technologies and new systems of circulation (of both people and images), the practices of hunting and photography played crucial and symbiotic roles. Similar to other powerful propagandist tools, the photographs' production and circulation were closely controlled. While the efficacy of the photographs depended to a large degree on a sense of veracity, they were, in fact, like the big game hunts they recorded, highly staged and structured. Moreover, like the hunts, the pictures required considerable effort to pull off and could be dangerous for those involved—including those who were just riding in the shikar van.

This chapter explores the relationships between shikar, kingship, and an emerging international culture of travel as framed by Dayal's photography from Hyderabad. It analyses the prevalent subjects captured in Dayal's hunting images, the visual strategies employed in these images, the underlying reasons for their import, and the ways in which their circulation was controlled. In order to probe more closely the relationship between "truth" and propaganda in hunting photography, the chapter concludes by focusing on photographs from one specific shikar trip—that organized for Lord and Lady Curzon during their 1902 visit to Hyderabad.

### Shikar, Kingship and Photography

Big-game hunts, and artistic representations of them, have been closely associated with kingship since ancient Mesopotamia. As the historian Thomas Allsen explains, "The royal hunt displays a ruler's ability to marshal and order labor, military manpower, and individuals (both humans and animals) with very special skills. Moreover, by the very nature of the hunt, these abilities were dramatically demonstrated throughout the countryside for the edification of subjects."<sup>7</sup> To ensure that the message was conveyed to as wide an audience as possible, images of the hunt, particularly those focusing on the theme of the heroic royal hunter, formed a crucial part of the equation. Dayal's shikar photographs fall squarely into this tradition. More specifically, the hunt in the late 19th century drew together symbolic elements found in ruling ideologies of the British Raj, Mughal traditions of kingship and a newly emerging international elite culture of travel.<sup>8</sup>

The centrality of hunting to the Raj has been well documented. Many studies, such as those by John MacKenzie and James Ryan, have shown how big-game hunting and its associated images not only unequivocally embody the political and cultural domination that we identify with Western colonial rule today, but did so at the time as well.<sup>9</sup> As many travel guides, novels, and memoirs from the 19th



# ELITE LIFE IN HYDERABAD AND SECUNDERABAD

Deborah Hutton





One of the most charming photographs of elite life by Dayal portrays a group of British and Indian attendees to a fancy dress party hosted by Hyderabad's Prime Minister, Sir Asman Jah (fig. 98). The party was held on 17 February 1890 at Bashir Bagh, Jah's palace, and the image depicts 46 guests arranged in rows on the palace veranda with their host, the Prime Minister, seated at the front and centre of the group. The attendees' costumes range from princes to prisoners to fairies and, in one case, a bottle of Bass beer. Despite the sitters' attempts to adopt the serious comportment befitting formal portraiture, or perhaps because of it, the frivolity of the event comes through. The juxtaposition of playfulness (conveyed by the costumes) with formality (conveyed by the composition) provides much of the photograph's charm.

Even though the image succeeds in capturing the party's light-hearted atmosphere, the photograph was not actually taken at the February 17th party. Some days after the event occurred, Asman Jah decided that his party guests should have been photographed in their fancy dress. He invited them to re-don their costumes and return to his residence for a Saturday "At Home," at which he arranged for Dayal and his assistants to be present with their photographic apparatus. As the *Deccan Times* explained, "The primary object [of Jah's Saturday gathering] was that photographs should be taken of His Excellency's guests, although, of course, it was intended (and the intention was fully carried out) that all should enjoy themselves."<sup>1</sup> Enjoy themselves they did, for according to the newspaper, Dayal had difficulty getting the attendees to settle down and pay heed to his instructions: "...people

who had nothing to do with the group persisted in walking behind those whom the photographer was endeavouring to bring together. Those in the group, too, were not entirely blameless—notably Mephistopheles and the Mandarin [referring to two guests by their costumed identities]—the latter creating a sensation by dropping his head-gear on the head of a Fairy."<sup>2</sup>

The fancy dress picture underscores the performative aspect of 19th-century photographic portraiture by capturing not only role-playing, but a double role-playing of sorts: the re-creation of an event—the original February 17th party—during which people playfully took on alternate identities.<sup>3</sup> The re-creation of the party specifically so that it could be captured in photographic form, not to mention the detailed recording in the local newspaper, also drives home the central place that photography, and particularly Dayal's photography, held amongst the elite culture of 1890s Hyderabad and Secunderabad. This exclusive society, as the picture documents, included both British and Indians, who interacted in formal and friendly ways. The costumes serve to blur individual status within the group, thereby conveying the idea that to be part of the fancy dress contingent was a sign of belonging to a cohesive elite class. Overall, the photograph, like many of the period, reinforced the dominant order of society through the performance of the sitters. The picture, however, not only marked social status but also served as a souvenir, a visual record of memorable events—in this case a costume party and its subsequent repetition that, by all accounts, were festive and fun gatherings. As such, the image would have conjured up personal memories of both the original party and the subsequent "At Home" for those who had attended. Like many other 19th-century photographic portraits, then, the picture seems to have had two main functions: the marking of social status and the preservation and evocation of memory.<sup>4</sup>

The Alkazi Collection of Photography's print of the fancy dress party portrait forms part of an album, three highly



98 ♦ DEEN DAYAL  
Sir Asman Jah and Fancy Dress Ball Guests, Bashir Bagh Palace,  
February 1890  
From *A Souvenir from Nawab Sir Asman Jah, Hyderabad (Deccan) 1895*  
Albumen Print, Photographer's Ref. 8320, 211 x 291 mm  
ACP: 97.20.0001(36)

Previous pages

LALA DEEN DAYAL & SONS, SECUNDERABAD

H.E. Sir Asman Jah's Saloons, 1891

From *A Souvenir from Nawab Sir Asman Jah, Hyderabad (Deccan) 1895*

Albumen Print, Photographer's Ref. 10089, 241 x 361 mm

ACP: 99.23.0006(38)



Chapter 7

# INTERIORS AND INTERIORITY

Deepali Dewan





In February 1891, guests who had gathered at Sir Asman Jah's Bashir Bagh Palace for a theatrical production witnessed Dayal walk on stage and take a photograph of the audience (fig. 117).<sup>1</sup> There was a flash from some lamps and a puff of smoke. Most in attendance thought the attempt to take a photograph in the darkened space had been a dismal failure and expressed their sympathies to Dayal afterwards. On the contrary, what resulted was a photograph in which, as one newspaper reported, "the audience [came] out beautifully, even better than if taken by daylight."<sup>2</sup> This photograph shows a large interior hall with Sir Frederick Roberts, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian army, seated in the front row on an elaborate sofa with the Resident

*Previous pages*  
LALA DEEN DAYAL  
Interior view of Jayendr Bhawan [Jai Vilas] Palace at Gwalior, late 1878  
From *Album of Views in Central India Gwalior*  
Albumen Print, Photographer's Ref. 19, 194 x 246 mm  
ACP: 98.60.0296(01)

117 ♦ DEEN DAYAL  
Commander-in-Chief Lord Frederick Roberts and Party at Bashirbagh Theatre after Dinner, February 1891  
From *A Souvenir from Nawab Sir Asman Jah, Hyderabad (Deccan) 1895*  
Albumen Print, Photographer's Ref. 9625, 198 x 263 mm  
ACP: 97.20.0001(40)



118 ♦ LALA DEEN DAYAL & SONS, SECUNDERABAD  
Banquet to Grand Duke's of Russia at Bashirbagh, March 1891  
From *A Souvenir from Nawab Sir Asman Jah, Hyderabad (Deccan) 1895*  
Albumen Print, Photographer's Ref. 9727, 249 x 373 mm  
ACP: 99.23.0006(33)