

RAJA DEEN DAYAL

Artist-Photographer in 19th-Century India











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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

passion for collecting photography and its interpretation through a ground-breaking series of scholarly publications, none of this would have come to fruition.

We also would like to express gratitude and appreciation to the descendents of Deen Dayal for their hospitality, generosity, graciousness, and support over the years. Uma Jain and Vikas Jain are patient and vigilant keeps of the Dayal Studio's legacy in Hyderabad. Hemalata Jain, the great granddaughter of Dayal, was a scholar of his work in her own right and keeper of the website www.deendayal.com. She travelled the world in order to deepen her own knowledge of photographic technologies and Dayal's work. More than once, she and her husband, N. K. Jain, acted as supremely generous hosts to us at their home in Mumbai. During those visits, we were privileged to witness up close Hemlata's boundless energy and intelligence. It fills us with sadness that Hemlata is not here to celebrate the publication of the book with us; we hope that she would have been pleased by the final product.

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Finally, none of this would have been possible without the unconditional support of people in our individual lives.

DEBORAH HUTTON: First, I would like to give heartfelt recognition to the students in the Spring 2006 and Spring 2009 sections of my Photography in India seminar. I am lucky to teach engaged, thoughtful students who not only patiently listen to my ramblings, but who also display consistent intellectual curiosity that makes my job a delight and allows me to see the material in fresh ways. To Riksum Kazi: your detailed explanations of the many pitfalls and strategies of Halli Sicca and government rupee conversion methods were priceless—thank you! My thanks also to the many colleagues and friends in the field of South Asian art and art history more generally, who read portions of the manuscript along the way, provided me with forums to

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DEEPALI DEWAN: For tracking down those elusive sources, I thank current and former ROM librarians Jack Howard, Kang-mei Wang, and Champa Ramjass. For a collegial and supportive atmosphere, I thank the curators and staff at the Royal Ontario Museum, especially Gwen Adams, Annette Boenke-Jarek, Janet Cowan, Mark Engstrom, Sarah Fee, Silvia Forni, Beth Knox, Alexandra Palmer, Dan Rahimi, Karin Ruehrdanz and Chen Shen. For intellectual exchange and emotional support over the years, I thank my colleagues at the University of Toronto's Department of Art, especially Mark Cheetham, Elizabeth Harney and Kajri Jain; my interns and students, especially Ameera Nimjee, Sarah Richardson and Olga Zotova; and fellow "photoners" in the Toronto Photography Seminar, who pushed me to think about the varied work that photography does. A special thanks to Ameera Nimjee for doing the hard work of digitizing the Dayal Studio registers from microfilm and taking the first

stab at deciphering the handwriting in them. I also express appreciation for colleagues in the field from whom I've learned much directly or indirectly: Catherine Asher, Frederick Asher, Susan Bean, Rebecca Brown, Padma Kaimal, Janice Leoshko, Stephen M. Markel, Partha Mitter, Christopher Pinney, Gloria Raheja, and Tapati Guha-Thakurta. While lessons from the recent past have helped structure and shape the book, it is lessons learned long ago that I relied on to sustain this project through the highs and lows. For these I thank the members of my large and extended family spread out over several continents. My parents Anil and Barbara Dewan (from whom I learned about unconditional love), sister Naina (who always says exactly what I need to hear exactly when I need to hear it), brother Arjun (from whom I've learned the art of brevity), sister-in-law Rachel, and nephews Zev, Kiran and Rakhi, all gave me love and patience even when it seemed this project would never end. Bhaskar Dewan, Deepak and Usha Dewan, Alka Goyal, Ashish and Madhu Goyal, Payal and Rajat Kakkar, Priya and Vineet Kanojia, Arati Krishna, and Sonal and Ravi Prakash were always ready to open their homes and hearts to me. My daddi, Indira Dewan, saw the beginning but not the end of this book, and I will always be thankful for her stories and her spirit. Finally, without the gentle and solid support of Clayton Cobb, this book would never have happened. He and our daughter Kryshna, who was born during the writing of this book, are my constants. They have made me a better me, and thus this book a better book. I am forever grateful to have them in my life.

D.D. and D.H.



Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Deborah Hutton and Deepali Dewan

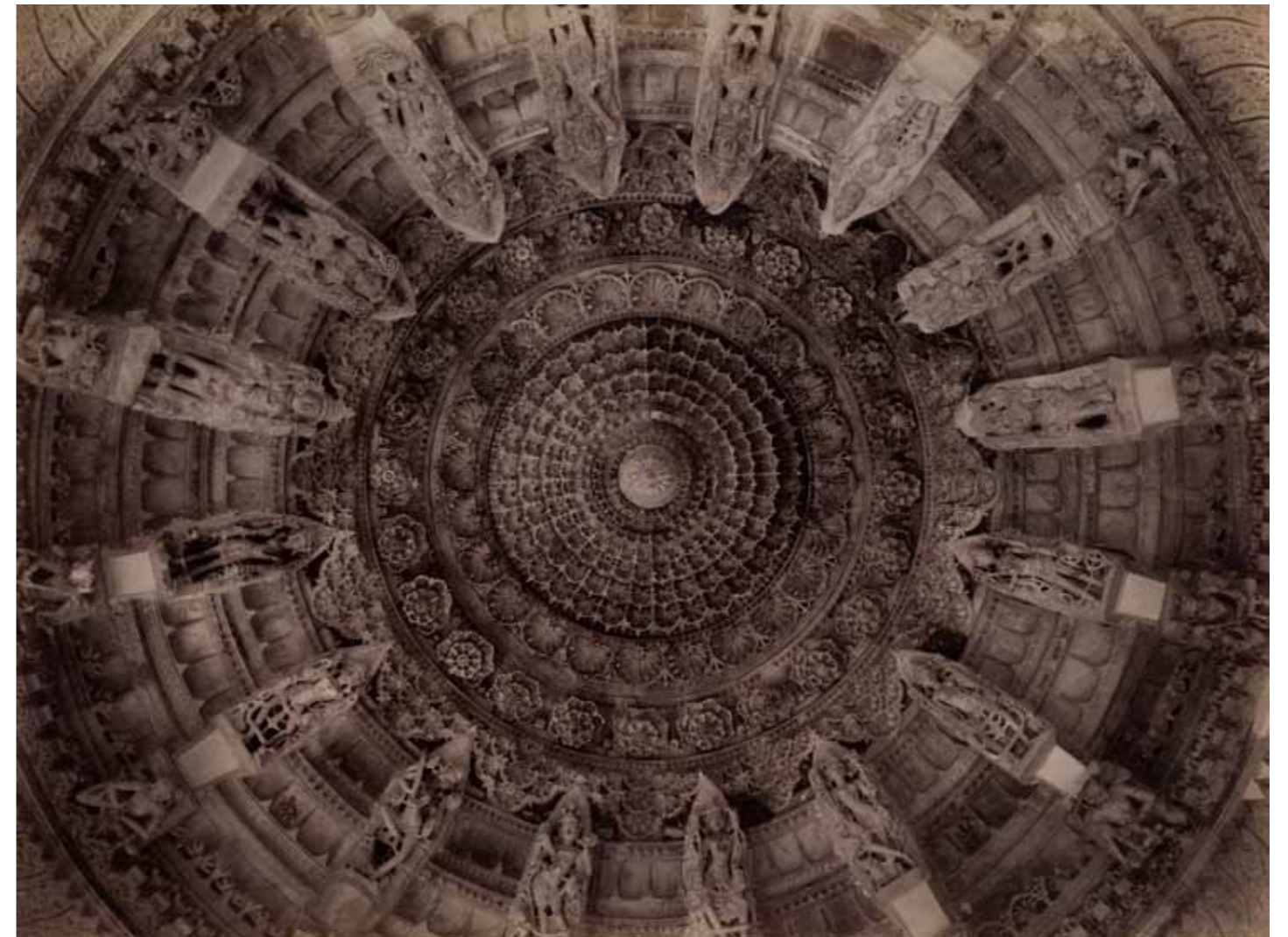
The Myth of Dayal: Rise of an Icon

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).¹ 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.²

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.³ 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.”⁴

Previous pages

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