



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE NIZAM STATE IN THE LATE 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

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**Abstract:** In the Nizam state, several photographers work in the capital region. Particularly in the cantonment regions like Secunderabad and Bolarum. In the 1870s and 1880s, several photographers established studios in Hyderabad and provisionally worked for the Nizam government. Raja Deen Dayal came to Hyderabad in September 1887 and two years later settled in Hyderabad, after his first photographic album achieved a great commercial success. He became the court photographer to the VI<sup>th</sup> Nizam Mir Mahboob Ali Khan in 1894 after 7 years of work in Hyderabad. The Nizam extended patronage to photography and granted him a monthly salary. The Nizam also took initiatives to document architecture in the state and also used cameras to document famine relief efforts in 1899-1900. However, Raja Deen Dayal & Sons studio firm incurred losses after 1903, and two years later, he passed away. The studio was operated on a small scale compared to previous years. The late years were also a period of significant transformation in the history of photography.

**Key Words:** Public Works Department, Daguerreotype Photography, Documentation of Architecture, Central India Agency, and Visit Albums.

### Introduction

Similar to the growth of photographic activity in India from the early 1840s, after the invention of the Daguerreotype camera obscura in Western Europe, the Nizam State also experienced such growth. Particularly in the cantonment areas of Secunderabad and Bolarum, where the Nizam troops were stationed and large number of English people used to live. In the 1870s, there were several street photographers in these areas. During the same period, photographers such as Edalji Sorabji, Parsee Dosabhoy, Molkenteller Maisc & Co, J.E. Plyte, and S. Dhanjeebhoy. From the late 1880s, Raja Deen Dayal also served the VI<sup>th</sup> Nizam Mir Mahboob Ali Khan (1869-1911).

### Raja Deen Dayal

Raja Deen Dayal was a remarkable photographer in British India. He worked for the VI<sup>th</sup> Nizam for 18 years during his lifetime from 1887 to 1905. Since 1889, his family has largely been based in Hyderabad. Deen Dayal was born in 1844 in Sardhana, a town near Meerut, in northern India, to an Agarwal Digambar Jain family of jewellers. At 20, Deen Dayal, the youngest child, entered Thomason Civil Engineering College at Roorkee to study surveying in 1864. Since he served the Nizams for nearly two decades in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a large part of this article covers Raja Deen Dayal and his work. After graduating, he obtained a job in Indore at the Public Works Department of the Central India Agency. Deen Dayal graduated in August 1866 with the second-highest marks in his class (1217/ 1550 marks) and a prize in surveying. By November 1866, Dayal had obtained a position as Draftsman and Estimator in the Office of the Chief Engineer of the Public Works Department of the Central India Agency at Indore. He did well from the start, being referred to as a “very smart, clever lad” and a “rising man” by the superintending engineer a few months after he started.

His education and the equipment he used while doing his work helped him in photographing successfully. Among the tools Dayal used in his job as a surveyor was the theodolite (the most important instrument used by surveyors), which measures horizontal and vertical angles between two objects. These tools were optical devices and had camera-like features in their construction and how they functioned. Similar to a camera, these tools operate like a camera, the surveyor is required to look through a lens and frame a view of the landscape. Along with his perfect use of tools, his mastery of surveying principles helped him. Some of these principles can be seen applied in Dayal's early landscape and architectural photographs around Central India. Before starting his career as a photographer, his education and job experience built an unacknowledged solid foundation for his photography success.

It is not clear how or when the photographer began working with an actual camera, and there are several accounts of it. However, there is a consensus among the art historians that he took first photographs around 1874. Even some sources mention that he knew and worked with a camera during his graduation at Thomason Civil Engineering College, where at that time the institution also offered photography classes. Between 1878 and 82, Deen Dayal had produced over 1000 images, relative to what he produced in the Nizam state later is negligible. However, from this period onwards, Deen Dayal's productivity in producing images increased as he started touring more widely in north India, the Bombay Presidency, and part of Rajasthan. After these visits and winning a gold medal for his participation at the 1883-84 Calcutta Exhibition, Deen Dayal was encouraged to take a two-year furlough starting in 1885 to conduct a wider photographic tour around north India and further establish himself as an adept photographer. During these two years, he travelled extensively through Rajasthan, Agra, and Delhi, and then through Central India again. The photos he took at Agra, particularly the Taj Mahal photographs, were applauded. To increase his reputation and maintain it from 1885 onwards, he sent his best photographs to *The Graphic*.

### **Photography in the 1880s in the Nizam State**

In the 1880s, before Deen Dayal came to Hyderabad in September 1887, there were several photographers in Hyderabad, and they also worked for the Nizams, but most often they were provisional. Mr. Stirn is one such photographer who took the VI<sup>th</sup> Nizam Mir Mahboob Ali Khan. The files regarding the photographer are available in the Telangana State Archives and Research Institute, Hyderabad. In the year 1882, a famous photography studio firm, P. Vuccino, which was essentially based in Bombay, also took Nizam's photographs. Similar to this firm, another firm based in Calcutta, Johnston and Hoffman. The state archives have evidence of this studio's presence in Hyderabad. There are other photographers in the Nizam state. But no one secured employment from the Nizams for more than two years, like Deen Dayal. It was only Bourne & Shepherd's studio that worked for the Nizam in the mid-1870s for almost two years.

Deen Dayal made his first visit to Hyderabad in September of 1887 to photograph its monuments as well as the camp exercises held in Secunderabad that year. *The Deccan Times* newspaper mentioned his arrival on 20<sup>th</sup> September to Hyderabad in its article which reads "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 article goes on to praise the quality and extent of his work. Such mention by newspapers increases the photographer's popularity, and it was common in those times to mention photographers. Some newspapers advertise these photographers for customers and to increase their publicity, for instance, Bourne & Shepherd's studio was well known for this. Deen Dayal also advertised, but not as frequently as Bourne & Shepherds. The state not only contained the historic cities of Hyderabad and Golconda, both former capitals of the Qutubshahi dynasty, but it also included the cities of Warangal, Gulbarga, and Aurangabad, as well as the famous excavated monuments and paintings at Ajanta and Ellora. All of these cities are filled with rich materials for an adept photographer.

In September 1887, after finishing photographing the famous Langar Procession, Deen Dayal started taking pictures of architecture around Hyderabad, Secunderabad, and Golconda. Deen Dayal left Hyderabad and then travelled to Warangal and Hanmakonda with his photographic apparatus, where he photographed Kakatiya architecture. From there, he concentrated on photographing the historical sites located in the western part of the Nizam state, places such as Gulbarga, Aurangabad, Daulatabad, Ellora, Khuldabad, and Ajanta. At each of these places, he took photographs with meticulous plans and utmost care. For instance, the photographer deliberately used humans to highlight the length and height of architecture. Most of these images were included in *Glimpses of the Nizam Dominions: Being an Exhaustive Photographic History of the*

Hyderabad State, Deccan India, 1898, which was published in 1898. He also photographed the Ajanta and Ellora caves and the Mughal tombs in the state. After finishing his work in the state, he went to Uttar Pradesh in February 1888 to photograph military camp exercises there.



Photograph 01: Photographer: Raja Deen Dayal, *The Charminar, General view*, 1887. Source: *Views of H.H. the Nizam's Dominions, 1888*, from Telangana State Archives and Research Institute, Hyderabad.

The photographer decided to return to Hyderabad from North India, which most probably resulted from the high success of his first album in the state. Out of the 300 images he had taken of the princely state, Deen Dayal composed an album titled *Views of H.H. the Nizam's Dominion, Hyderabad Deccan, 1888*, containing 100 photographs. The Prime Minister, Sir Asman Jah, purchased 30 copies of this album at a total cost of Rs 10,000, a considerable amount of money at the time (as a comparison, a few years later, Deen Dayal purchased a spacious plot for his new Raja Deen Dayal & Sons studio in Secunderabad for Rs 39,000. The photographer received his total payment in two installments that year.

The album clearly reflects the care with which Deen Dayal carried out each step in the process. From arranging his travels, choosing the subjects to photograph, finding the best vantage point from which to compose each scene, posing figures, taking and printing resulting images, picking the 100 prints included in the album from the original 300 photographs, deciding the order in which to present them, purchasing the gilt leather album from England, and assembling all the parts- Deen Dayal approached each part of the project with the utmost attention to detail. These photographs also played an important role in the photographer becoming the court photographer of the VI<sup>th</sup> Nizam Mir Mahboob Ali Khan. The same photographs were also included in the later ready-made albums. After the success of the album, he shifted to Hyderabad.

### Photography in the Nizam State in the 1890s

In 1892, upper-class women could not directly go to a photo studio and take photos, as it was forbidden by the social practice of purdah. Such women were called “Zenana Women”. To tap profits from this section of the society, Deen Dayal established the Zenana Studio in 1892 in Hyderabad. The information about its establishment comes from journals and newspapers. Even before the studio establishment, Deen Dayal's lady photographer used to take their photographs. Deen Dayal used to send a lady artist with the essential apparatus to take photographs of the purdah woman. The Zenana Studio was fully employed with female staff only, as males cannot see these women. Deen Dayal's efforts to maximise the studio's profits resulted in a big commercial success.

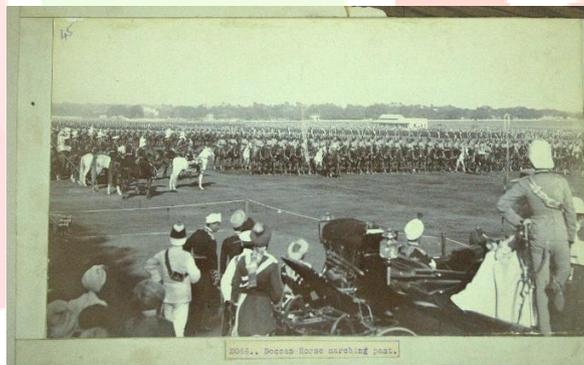
Photographing hunting was common for the VI<sup>th</sup> Asaf Jah, particularly when his hunting trip was very successful. Late one night in June 1894, Deen Dayal received an urgent summons. The Nizam was on a hunting trip in the Pakhal jungle, where he was having success bagging tigers. He wanted the photographer to join him immediately at camp so that his achievements could be recorded. With the assistance of the railway authorities, whom Deen 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. From there, the photographer reached the hunting camp and started his work. Only after 3 p.m. in the afternoon, he was relieved by the Nizam's work. The Nizam observed the photographer and built a good opinion of Deen

Dayal. The Nizam praised the photographer's work on that. About a month later, when the durbar was held in conjunction with Nizam's birthday, the ruler officially bestowed the title of "Raja Bahadur Musavvir Jung" (translated as Bold Warrior of Photography) on Deen Dayal and appointed him as the court photographer to the Nizam's government with a salary of Rs 600 per month. Apart from this, Deen Dayal was also known as the state photographer.

This act of granting a monthly salary to Deen Dayal significantly helped him financially in his photographic entrepreneurship and in commercializing his reputation as the court photographer in his field to attract more customers. Since the photography profession was a very risky business in those days, many photographers used to have other sources of secondary income. Deen Dayal hedged his photography entrepreneurship with a monthly salary. After a few years, his studio establishment shifted to a bigger space on James Street.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Hyderabad was considered the pre-eminent princely state. The Nizam's state was the richest state with the largest territory, it featured at the top of the British-designated hierarchical system of salute tables and the Order of the Star of India.<sup>97</sup> Because of this, all the viceroys during Mir Mahboob Ali Khan's reign made their way to Hyderabad at one point or another. The Nizam state, under the Mir Mahboob Ali Khan, received more foreign visits than any other princely state. When a foreign royal dignitary or the Viceroy of India visited the state, the photographers were commissioned to take photos from their entry at the borders until they departed from the state, and with these photos studio used to make albums, so these were called visit albums.

These visit albums were produced almost regularly while Asman Jah was the Prime Minister, but only intermittently after he passed away in 1897. One of the last visit albums produced by the Deen Dayal studio during Asman Jah's lifetime was of Lord Elgin's Visit in 1895. The prime was very interested in photography, and the photographer Deen Dayal felt the proximity was enough to ask for a house loan, which was rejected due to the fact that it was in contrast to the rules in the state. During such visits, it was common for both the host and the guest to watch the parade of the troops of the Nizams. One such photograph is presented below

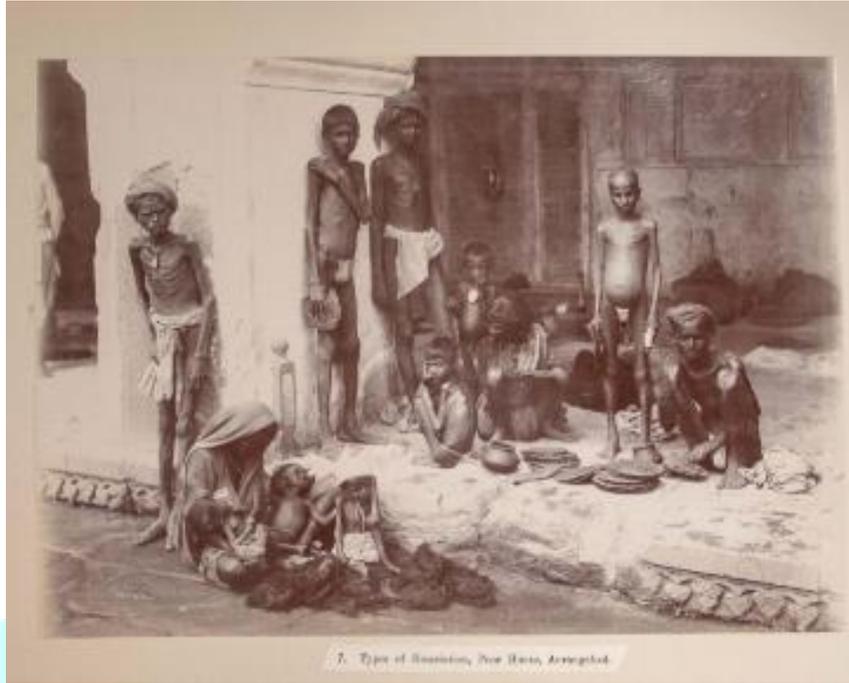


Photograph 02: Photographer: Gyan Chand Deen Dayal, VI<sup>th</sup> Nizam Inspecting Deccan Horse Troops Marching. From Telangana State Archives and Research Institute, Hyderabad.

The Deen Dayal visit albums were bound in full maroon or green leather, with gilt lettering on the cover and each page edged in gold. They were deliberately produced as expensive objects symbolizing wealth and power. The prepared albums were given to the guests as presents before their departure to their homeland. The expense of the visit album relies heavily on the guests who are coming. Sometimes, such albums were never made when the Nizam felt the host did not deserve certain respect.

Occurrences of famines were common, whether in British India or the Nizam Dominions. Several famines hit the Nizam state in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as in 1804, 1813, 1866., 1876, and 1899-1900. The last famine in 1899-1900 was called Chappanya Kal. The Hyderabad famine of 1899-1900 largely affected the western part of the state, including regions such as Sitagoan, Lassur, Rosa, and Jalna in Aurangabad District; Kalamnuru, in Parbhani District; Belwara, Dharaseo, and Bursi in Naldurg District; and some places in Gulbarga District. The Nizam government started relief efforts immediately and also started documenting initiatives with photography. The government built provisional hospitals and temporary houses called "Poor

Houses". By doing so, the Raja Deen Dayal & Sons produced an album entitled *Famine Relief: H.H. Nizam's Dominions, Hyderabad Deccan 1899-1900*. The album contained 100 photographs. The album is currently in the Telangana State Archives, Hyderabad. However, the majority of the photos are either totally lost or damaged.



Photograph 03: Photographer: Unknown, *Affected children, at Poor House, Aurangabad, 1899-1900*. Source: *Famine Relief: H.H. Nizam's Dominions, Hyderabad Deccan 1899-1900*, Plate no 07, from Telangana State and Research Institute, Hyderabad.

During the late 1890s, the Nizam government took initiatives to document its territories' culture and architecture with the use of a camera. The government sponsored photographing, editing, and publishing a book-like album entitled *Glimpses of the Nizam Dominions: Being an Exhaustive Photographic History of the Hyderabad State, Deccan India, 1898*. Architecture in the state was documented from several of the revenue divisions, such as Aurangabad, Gulbarga, Bidar, Berar, and Warangal. Images in the text are mostly taken by Raja Deen Dayal and Mr. Polecek, a photographer in Hyderabad, and other professional photographers in Hyderabad also contributed with their cameras. The book was published in 1898, and all the photographs in the book were taken before 1898. Other photographers like Mr. Syed Ali Bilgram also worked for the Nizam, who made oil paintings of Mir Mahbboob Ali Khan. Many of the Deen Dayal supporters, who extended patronage, defaulted on their payments, including P.M. Asman Jah, and many Nizam nobles also. The Nizam government also had a financial dispute with his studio firm. The Delhi Durbar of 1903 incurred huge losses the Raja Deen Dayal & Studios. This is also the time several of his family members passed away. Due to bad health and creditors pressing from all side Deen Dayal passed away on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1905. Several newspapers published long obituaries about the demise.

### Conclusion

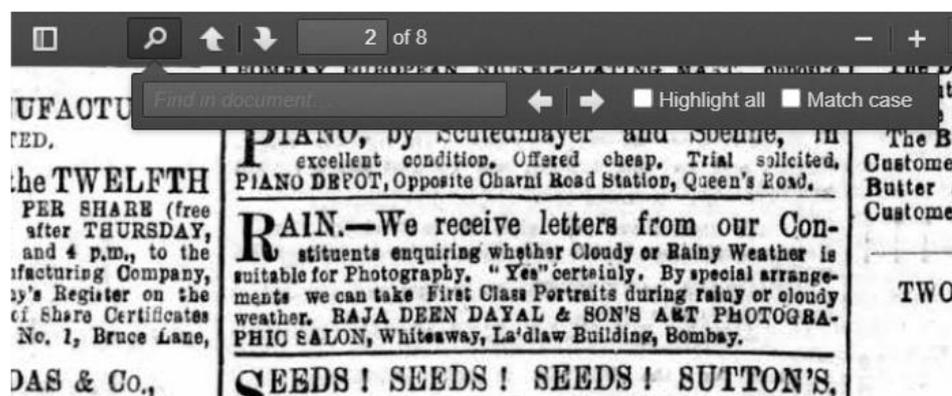
During the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, photography in the Nizam state meant largely VI<sup>th</sup> Asaf Jah Mir Mahboob Ali Khan and Raja Deen Dayal. The Nizam extended patronage to photography as he did to other fields of art, such as paintings, music, and literature. Deen Dayal worked successfully in Hyderabad for nearly two decades, which was really a great feat to achieve in the field of photography, given the risks entailed in it. During these last two and half a half decades, the art of photography produced an impressive photo-repository consisting of culture, architecture, and photographs that represent prevailing conditions in the Nizam state.

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## Annexures Newspapers

### The Times Of India, 15 October 1897



The Times of India, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1897, Deen Dayal Advertisement.



The Bombay Gazette, 15 February 1872

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