

# Shot with a view

## Lord Snowdon's photographs give a new insight into India's rich and famous

By Mandira Nayar



Lord Snowdon is known for his uncanny ability to freeze moods and moments in time. J.R.R. Tolkien, Jack Nicholson, Sophia Loren and Clint Eastwood have sat, looked soulfully into the camera to let him inside for a second to capture their character.

Even his divorce from Princess Margaret, Queen Elizabeth's sister, did not change his status in terms of his access to the royals, especially with his camera. He has now wielded his lens to reveal the hidden facets of India's rich and famous. His portraits together with essays by prominent Indian writers have been compiled into a book, *India by Snowdon*. The exhibition of the portraits in the book will be open till January 30 at PhotoInk in Delhi.

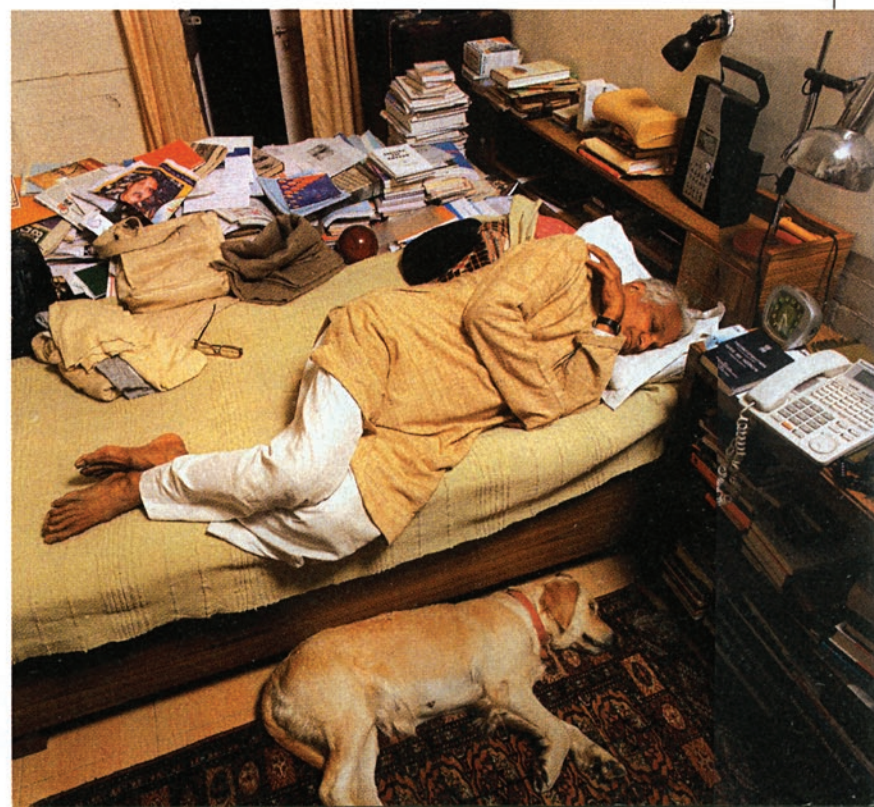
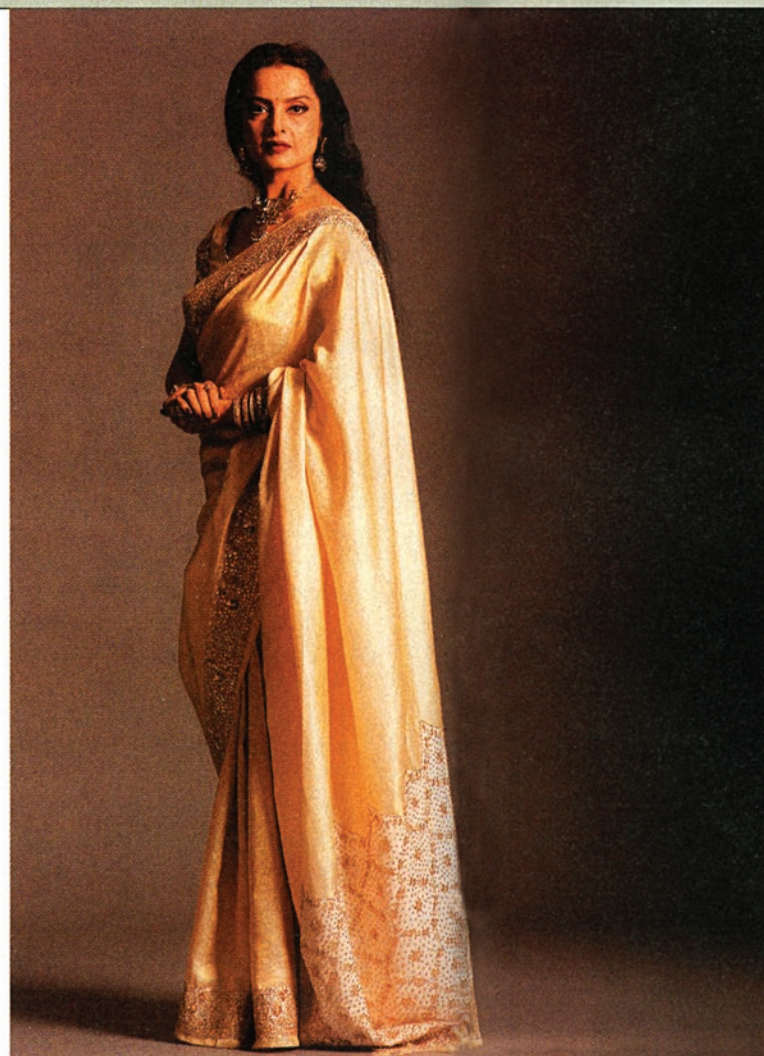
Delve into the pages and one sees Rekha at her enigmatic best, standing tall in a sari the colour of egg-nog, looking straight into the camera. Her hands are clasped in front, long nails painted maroon and her wavy hair is the only element that is allowed to be free in the photograph.

Armed with a Hassleblad and in a wheelchair, Snowdon travelled across India in 2004 to freeze the most important Indians in their favourite setting. There is the FabIndia family, mother and son duo Bimla and William Bissell, in their chic outfits

with a puppet sandwiched between them and E. Sreedharan next to his pet project—the Delhi Metro.

There are many photos that offer that rare glimpse into the inner world of the famous. There is the iconic posture of Dilip Kumar looking straight at the camera with defiance. He may not be in the limelight anymore, but the picture establishes that he still has screen presence even if his jet-black hair is almost at odds with his ageing face.

While Dilip Kumar allows himself to be revealed by directly looking into the camera, the firebrand politician George Fernandes lets the viewer into his sanctum where he lies asleep on a bed crowded with books. His dog quietly lies next to him. Lord



**Powerful frames:**  
(Clockwise from above)  
Photographer Lord Snowdon; Delhi CM Sheila Dikshit; former defence minister George Fernandes; actor Rekha; Philip Mathew, managing editor of THE WEEK

Snowdon who is famous for his eye for angles arrived at his house and found Fernandes fast asleep. "I took the picture and left," he said.

From political and cinematic celebrities to those who remain firmly behind the camera, Snowdon has captured media moguls, too. The managing editor of THE WEEK Philip Mathew sitting elegantly in a wayside magazine stall is one such example. A man who refused to conform to conventions, Snowdon was educated in Eton where he spent time creating radiograms and even a burglar alarm for his food cupboard.

Despite having clicked some of the most famous celebrity images, Lord Snowdon at 80 believes he is yet to take his best shot. Sitting in his wheelchair, Snowdon looked around the room full of his pictures and said: "None of them is my favourite. Maybe tomorrow." ■