

For Immediate Release**THE ANGLO-INDIANS****Book release and exhibition of photographs by Dileep Prakash****March 15 – April 5, 2008**

My interest in the Anglo-Indian community grew out of my marriage to June (nee Davy), an Anglo-Indian from Jabalpur. We've been married for 15 years and I have become a part of her family and extended community. We have witnessed births and funerals, christenings and baptisms, celebrated marriages and Christmas, listened to Honky Tonk music and enjoyed many Sunday lunches of Ball curry and rice.

Over the years, I have observed a certain dichotomy within the community. There are those Anglo-Indians who have married into Hindu, Muslim and other communities and have assimilated into the mainstream of Indian society. Others continue to follow their traditions in relative isolation.

The term 'Anglo-Indians' came to define people of mixed descent combining Indian and British or European ancestry. Their forebearers immigrated to India in service of the British East India Company and the community came into existence as a result of intermarriages between British and European men and local women.

In the 500 years of their existence, the Anglo-Indian society developed its own lifestyle and cultural traditions, which were quite distinct from other Indians. The Anglo-Indian identity came into itself – the language, the dress, the food, the accent, the mannerisms and the homes that preserved English and European aesthetics.

The vast majority of Anglo-Indians left India for England, Australia and Canada in the lead-up to and immediately following the partition in India. A few migrate every year even today. These combined with inter-marriages and rapid westernisation of Indian society – point to a fair degree of assimilation of the Anglo-Indian society into the Indian mainstream. Some scholars believe that the community, with the current approximate population of 1,50,000, will be completely culturally assimilated by circa 2020. Others, especially those who have studied Anglo-Indian communities, in Canada and Australia, feel there is resurgence.

I travelled across India for two years making portraits of people from different walks of life – railwaymen, tea planters, models, performers, educationists, business professionals, writers, farmers and students. My journeys took me to Jabalpur, Bhusawal, Dehradun, Mussoorie, Bangalore, Kolar Gold Fields, Whitefield, Darjeeling, Dooars, Kalimpong, Jharsaguda, Khurda Road, Chakradharpur, Agra, Jhansi, Kolkata,

Santraganchi, Mumbai, Pune, Lonavla, Lucknow, Allahabad, Bilaspur, Chennai, Pondicherry, Visakhapatnam, Hyderabad, the Nilgiris, Fort Cochin, Thangaserri, Thiruvanthapuram and Vypeen.

My portraits attempt to probe the dichotomy, the assimilation and the inherent flux within the community.

BOOK RELEASE

The Anglo-Indians by Dileep Prakash

Published by Photoink

Mrs. Sheila Dikshit, Chief Minister, Delhi

will release the book on Saturday, March 15

at 6.30 pm at Photoink.

EXCERPTS FROM THE ESSAY 'THE ANGLO-INDIANS' BY IRWIN ALLAN SEALY

The Anglo-Indians are the first modern Indians. Before the Victorian Hindu renaissance, before the nawabi itch for things European, before the frankish musings of the Great Mogul, there appears this already committed community of westernizers who will speak the father's tongue and yet eat the mother's salt. The first mother must have felt this alien child move in her and wondered at the future she contained: would the child look like her, she must have asked, or like the father, that pale ravisher unlike any she had known. Or might it be a mixture of both, or something else again?

Within less than two generations, then, we find a distinct group of Indians, for all practical purposes a caste, existing in as yet easy proximity to the colonizing race, and distinct from the remainder of the population. The East Indians, by virtue of their colour spectrum, merge with Europeans at the fair end of the scale and with their own darks at the other end. Even when the fair go to the fair and the dark to the dark, such is the nature of genes that neither can be at all certain of the colour of their progeny. This may cause anxious moments in the ninth month, similar to the ones experienced by our hypothetical first mother's, but popular novelists have tended to overstate the neuroses involved. Already by the middle of the eighteenth century the great majority are marrying among themselves without the slightest thought for the colour their offspring. This is in itself a trait so modern that most other Indians have still to acquire it in the twenty-first century.

It is not as a group that Anglo-Indians file through these pages. Character is a matter of personal traits rather than collective ones; after all, you experience a people not as a people but one by one. The portraits gathered together in this book are of individuals; how distinct will become apparent to even the casual page-turner. There are no stereotypes, not even types. Every person here has made his or her bed and sleeps in it without complaint. He looks out at you with a steady gaze; she meets your inquisition with a calm you cannot disturb. It took the patience, skill, and tact of an accomplished photographer to grasp this dignity.

ABOUT IRWIN ALLAN SEALY

Irwin Allan Sealy is the author of *The Trotter-Nama*, a novel chronicling seven generations of Anglo-Indian life. His other novels include *Hero*, *The Everest Hotel*, *The Brainfever Bird*, and most recently, *Red*. He is also the author of a travel book, *From Yukon to Yucatan*. He lives in Dehradun, and winters in Pondicherry.

ABOUT DILEEP PRAKASH

Dileep Prakash (b.1965) has been photographing for twenty years. A considerable part of Prakash's work navigates memory and history. His fascination for steam locomotives began early when he traveled between his boarding school and home. By the mid-1990s, most steam locomotives had been retired but he was able to photograph the last of the steam trains and the people who worked on them. His project on the Anglo-Indian community led him to the far corners of India, making portraits of a community in twilight. *The Anglo-Indians* was exhibited at the Goethe-Institut, Frankfurt (2006), and included in the Photoquai Biennale at the Musée Quai Branly, Paris (2007). In 2008, *The Anglo-Indians* was published as a book and exhibited at Photoink, New Delhi. In 2009, *The Anglo-Indians* was part of a group exhibition, *The Self and the Other – Portraiture in Contemporary Indian Photography* at the Palau de la Virreina and Artium in Spain, *Where Three Dreams Cross: 150 years of Photography from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* at the Whitechapel Gallery, London (2009). He is currently photographing boarding schools built by the British in colonial India. He continues to explore and engage with human neglect and attachment. Dileep Prakash lives in New Delhi and is represented by Photoink.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2008 *The Anglo-Indians*, Photoink, New Delhi, India
- 2007 *The Anglo-Indians*, Biennale Photoquai, Musée du quai Branly, Paris
- 2006 *The Anglo-Indians*, Goethe Institut, Frankfurt am Main
- 2001 *Romancing Steam*, India International Centre, New Delhi

BOOKS

- 2007 *The Anglo-Indians*, monograph, published by Photoink, New Delhi. Essay by Irwin Allan Sealy.
- 2007 *India Now – New Visions in Photography*, published by Textuel, Paris and Thames & Hudson, UK (contribution only)
- 2005 *The Anglo-Indians*, limited edition Artist Book, published by Photoink, New Delhi
- 2003 *Whistling Steam*, published by Roli Books, New Delhi