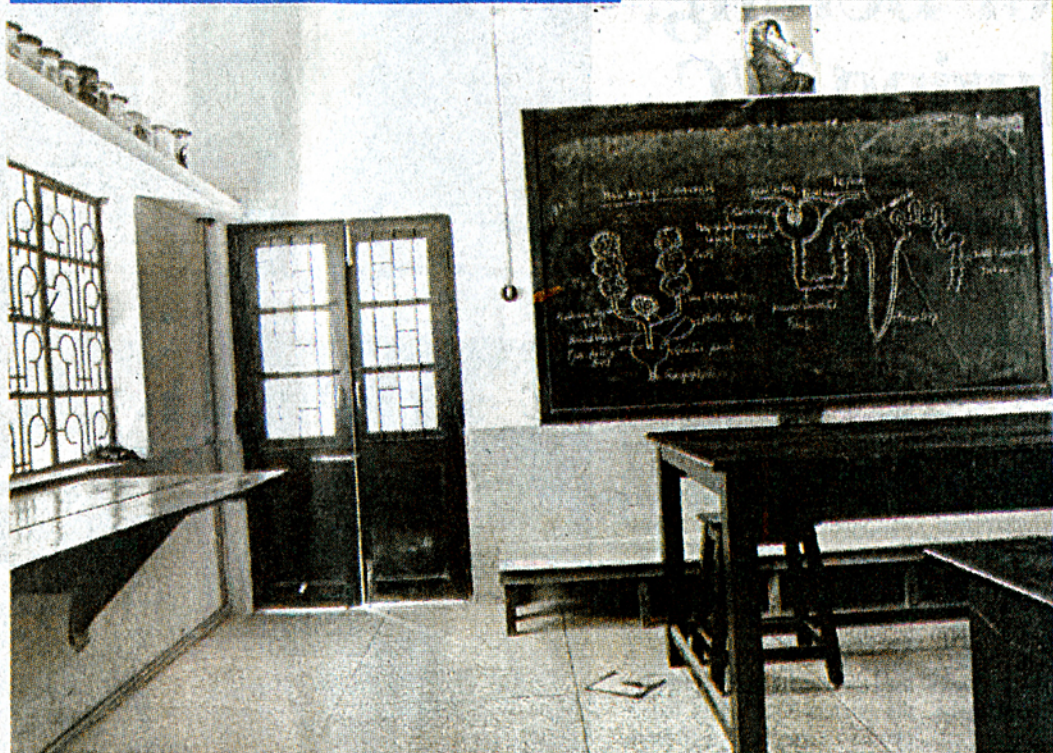


**UNIQUE** is the way in which Dileep Prakash, who describes himself as a photo-archivist, chooses to tell his stories. At first glance the series of uncaptioned pictures in his exhibitions and books appear disjointed, however there is a certain intertwining of the images that in a subtle way harmonise into a theme. Yet he does not appear repetitive in the fashion he articulates himself: two years ago it was through faces that he paid tribute to the vibrancy of the Anglo-Indian community, in his latest offering he has eliminated the human being from his essay that saw him taking thousands of photographs in 19 old boarding schools across the country.

However, 'What Was Home' is not a celebration of yesteryear's upper class education in the expected manner ~ in fact some who proudly flaunt the old school tie might feel a little disturbed at his projection of the seemingly cold, lonely, and perhaps even harsh dimensions of boarding-school life. It would have been easy, maybe even "profitable", for him to craft a tale that would "please all": but since the truth is integral to art, and his memories of school were not entirely pleasant, he has scripted his photographic offering the way he "saw it".

His choice of the black-and-white format for his display (on till 28 May at Photoink, 1 Jhandewalan, Faiz Road, which has also published the collection in book form) is two-fold. When he learnt photography at Mayo College, Ajmer, colour was still a rare medium. And since there was a certain grimness to his theme, the stark format was most authentic. Clever interplay of light and shade, seamless blending of tones underscore his theme. An empty classroom, neatly laid out dormitory, washing spread to dry on a hillside are more than damn good photographs that flashback to an earlier era of the art form. They hint at the regimentation that Kipling hailed as critical to "make a man of him", and are simul-

## UNCONVENTIONAL, ARTICULATE



taneously passionate about the "something missing" in hostel life.

The years Prakash spent translating impressions into print have actually inspired him on to another project ~ photographing the old dak bungalows and rest-houses

that were part of his childhood. Maybe it is the strong autobiographical undercurrent to his endeavours that

make them so powerful yet sensitive. And gives him the fortitude to keep clicking his way to a satisfaction enhanced by the sharing of it.