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# IN THE EYES OF THE LORD



■ SAY PARMESAN: Lord Snowdon RONJOY GOGOI/HT

**ANTHONY SNOWDON** has captured many through his lens. In Delhi to attend the 'India by Snowdon' exhibition, he spoke to LALITA PANICKER about 'marvellous' people, India and himself

## inconversation



**India by Snowdon**  
Anthony Snowdon  
THE NAND AND JEET  
KHEMKA FOUNDATION  
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White wine at 4.30 pm at Jhandewalan, a stone's throw from the RSS headquarters? If you are Anthony Snowdon — Lord Snowdon — it seems like just the right thing to do. 'Marvellous' seems to be a favourite word of the man whose hedonistic lifestyle as the husband of Britain's Princess Margaret once made headlines.

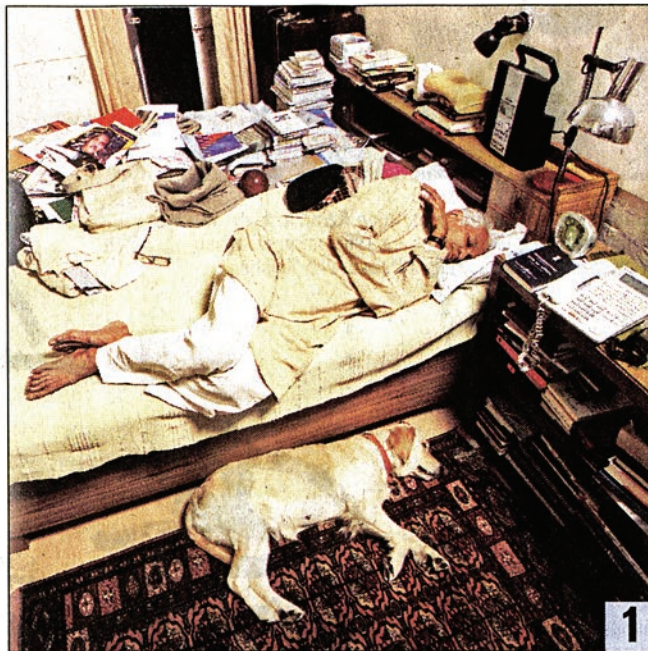
In India, to promote his book on Indian public personalities and to be at the launch of the exhibition marking its publication, Snowdon, now wheelchair-bound (all the photos in the fabulous *India by Snowdon* were taken from the wheelchair) is animated when he talks about the famous people he met and sparred with.

He will not be pinned down to one person who made a huge impression on him. Instead, he says that he finds himself to be the most interesting person he has met — and then goes on to say that he has never taken a good photograph yet.

It is when he warms up to the great celebrities of his time that Snowdon comes into his own. He never really studied photography beyond a week, studying natural sciences at Cambridge instead and then moving on to the British royal family with which he had very close interactions for several years. Of the pictures he has taken in his lifetime, ballet dancers feature significantly — Anna Pavlova, Rudolf Nureyev and Mikhail Barshnikov. His former wife, Margaret, was hugely fond of ballet.

Prince Charles — and again that word 'marvellous' comes in — is, according to him, a much misunderstood person who cares a lot about people. Which brings us to Princess Diana. "Beautiful, much loved," is his take.

Despite ill-health, Snowdon has survived several trips to India. "I just bring Marmite with me," he says. And he loves South India. "All Indians have



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**1 GEORGE FERNANDES:** The former Defence Minister and Rajya Sabha member taking a nap with a friend



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**2 REKHA:** Still looking quite the star, the 70s-80s actor does what she does best: be her strikingly gracious, elegant self

**3 LALU PRASAD:** RJD leader and former Bihar chief minister making a political gesture

actually such elegance, such style. We Brits can learn a lot from Indians."

His grandfather had a degree as a 'Master in Lunacy' in 1890 and managed to save someone who thought he had an eel in his stomach by putting the poor gent under, buying an eel from the fishmonger and then showing him the 'result' after he recovered from the 'procedure'. The man was cured.

Snowdon speaks of Katharine Hepburn, who he says was asked by an importunate journalist, "What is star quality?" to which she replied in her smoky voice, "I don't know, but I sure

got it." Of Joan Collins, the great photographer is a little dismissive. He photographed her eating a banana and when asked why he says, "You guess."

Snowdon doesn't quite tell us all the things that he knows. But the little he reveals is more than enough for those tired of instant celebrities.

The exhibition, 'India by Snowdon' is on at Photoink (011-2875 5940), 1 Jhandewalan Faiz Road, New Delhi 110005. 11 am-7 pm (closed on Sunday) till January 30



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## Developing the past



■ The Nizam of Hyderabad with his son, by Raja Deen Dayal & Sons, c. 1909

If you're more inclined towards photographs that give you a sense of history and drama, pick up the latest issue of the arts quarterly **Marg (Aperture and Identity, Rs 260)** that has a special issue dedicated to early photography in India. Essays by Shuddhabrata Sengupta (seven photographs from 19th century Kashmir), the introductory piece by Rahaab Allana, and Akshaya Tankha's interview with Madan Mehta of Mahatta Studio are worth reading. And then there are the images.