

# Portrait of a community

Delhi-based Dileep Prakash presents a photo-representation of the past, present and future of Anglo-Indians

By **Alpana Lath Sawai**  
alpana@mid-day.com

**A** mounted stag wears Rudolph's red antlers and his red nose while his neighbour looks dashing in a tie; a baker stands with 30 loaves of bread; a boy tips his skateboard; a girl in a frilly dress wears red slippers... we're used to looking for meaning everywhere — for the hidden truth or metaphor or at least the string that hangs all these portraits together. But Dileep Prakash's photographs of the Anglo-Indian community are not a pictorial parable; there is no interpretation of the community and its way of living. It's simply a documentation of the Anglo-Indian people as they are: in a state of flux, no doubt, but then who isn't engaged in the war between individual vs community-based identity vs the global citizen?

Thankfully, there's no such lecture in the photos. But if you've grown up or lived with Anglo-Indians, you'll look at the pictures and see how the images are exactly the ones in your head. Says Prakash, "Culturally, there are certain traits common to them — the singing, for instance, which starts in the church... Most

homes have a guitar, piano, and they are very good dancers — that is still there. But their other unique trait is their immense respect for labour — whether you are a *khalasi* or a general manager, at an evening party, you're on par."

Prakash's wife is Anglo-Indian and interacting with her family and becoming part of their life sparked his interest in them. So traveling around the country, he met some 5,000 people and photographed over a thousand of them. The result is an exhibition of portraits, shown for the first time in India last month at Devika Dault-Singh's Photoink Gallery in New Delhi.

Prakash's first show of *The Anglo-Indians* was a solo in Germany in 2006 at the Goethe Institut, Frankfurt am Main. This was followed by a group exhibition the following year at Biennale Photoquai, Musee du quai Branly, Paris. Prakash has also released two books on the same subject and he says his work is not yet done. "I want to take this exhibition across the country — to cities and smaller towns. But I also want to document them some more — I'd like to do testimonials on video... and document and archive all the cultural data I gather," he says.



Edith Garlah, Mussoorie



Sott Smith, Kolkata



Derek Clarke, Kalimpong



Stella and Trevor Hale, Bilaspur



Christine Fernandes, Khurda Road



Shelden Redden, Pune