



BOOK NOTES

Lionel Lumb

It's very pleasing to see the outpouring of Anglo-Indian literature in recent years shows no signs of abating. Historically, the community has suffered from inaccurate and inadequate portrayal in the past, and that's putting it mildly. Much of that writing has ranged from the simply ignorant to the deliberately pejorative. So the more Anglo-Indians write about ourselves – from our unique, insider point of view – the better. Setting the record straight is valuable not only for the present generation, with its memories and documentation reaching back many decades, but for future ones so they have a treasure trove to dig into and enjoy. At the same time, while we record the riches of the way we were, it's probably just as important to reflect on the way we are: it would be wonderful to see more written about our present-day roles in both India and our new homelands around the world.

Here are some notes about books published in recent months:

Voices on the Verandah: This anthology of Anglo-Indian prose and poetry is chock-full of riches. First of all, there's the range of voices: 24 contributors from India, nine from Australia, eight from the U.S.A, five from the U.K., three from Canada, and one each from New Zealand and Germany. Writing from the heart, inspired by subject matter unique to each, employing a variety of styles, together they've contributed a fascinating mix of always readable material. There's nostalgia, humour, insightful social comment, wrenching human drama, and haunting scenes or imagery. In every offering there are those special moments of recognition when a reader can say, with delighted surprise: "Yes, that's how it is...that's what I, too, think...that's exactly how I remember it...ah, now I understand, etc." Another big plus is that the contributions

were professionally edited by Margaret Deefholts and Sylvia W. Staub. That's a really important factor because many Anglo-Indian books, especially the self-published ones, suffer from the lack of a good editor. This one is high quality all the way.

The book evolved from a world-wide contest sponsored by Blair Williams of CTR Inc. in 2003. His object was two-fold: (a) to publish a collection of work showcasing Anglo-Indian cultural values and way of life; and (b) to raise money for the Community's less fortunate members in India. Two prizes of US \$500 each were awarded: one for prose and the other for poetry, and the contest drew an overwhelming response of 230 entries in total. *Voices on the Verandah* is a distillation of the best of these submissions: 22 short stories and 29 poems, and includes, as an added bonus, a "Guest Contributors" section featuring the work of distinguished Anglo-Indian writers such as Ruskin Bond, William Dalrymple and Russell Lucas.

To order, e-mail Blair Williams at: blairrw@att.net

Hearts Divided in The Raj: This is a delightful family memoir by **Patricia McGready-Buffardi**. Its strengths lie in the author's undoubted gift for telling a good yarn, her amazing sense of recall that sprinkles an abundance of lively detail into the events she writes about, and the diligent research she did with members of her family to round out the background. Anyone who has ever travelled by train in India will be captivated by her railway stories, which reach back to her great-grandfather, though it was Grandpa Alex who was undoubted "king of the clan". But she's equally good at describing life in convents and hill station schools, her father's experiences in the Indian Navy, and the joys and tribulations of the women in her family. While her pride and love shine through, she doesn't shirk from sharing some of the less rosy details, including her maternal grandfather's ill-fated foray as a settler in McCluskieganj. The author also has a sense of humour, and it enlivens many of the chapters.

The book may be purchased from Authorhouse,
Indiana: www.authorhouse.com/BookStore/ItemDetail~bookid~23656.aspx

or via <http://www.amazon.com/> or from the author herself:

patloubuf@wavecable.com

My Experience – The Anglo-Indian Australian Story: Compiled and edited by **Zelma Phillips**, this is another worthy offering from Australia, home now to many Anglo-Indians actively working at maintaining our heritage. The book's main strength lies in its broad sweep of mini-memoirs, from Anglo-Indians whose origins are from the north, east, south and west of India. This enables Ms. Phillips to include a wide variety of region-specific anecdotal experience, revealing interesting differences in attitudes and backgrounds. Another strength is that each contributor is asked not only to look back at India but also to talk about their thoughts on immigrating to Australia. Many photos add visual interest.

The book concludes with brief biographies of three Anglo-Indian authors in Australia who should already be familiar to readers. The best known is Dr. Gloria Jean Moore (*The Lotus and the Rose*, *The Anglo-Indian Vision*, and *Anglo-Indians – The Best of Both worlds*). The others are Esther Lyons (*Unwanted*, *Bitter Sweet Truth*, and *The Peacock and the Gum Tree*); and Captain Stan Blackford (*One Hell of a Life*).

My Experience may be purchased from the author (all profits go to selected charities in India and Australia). E-mail: zelma.w.phillips@gsk.com.

Anglo-Indians – A Life Lived Through Six British Monarchs: This memoir is about Dolly Dudman and her long, interesting life in India, written by her niece, **Elizabeth Faithful**. The content is more remarkable than the quality of the writing – the book needed a good editor. Nevertheless, a determined reader will be rewarded with insights not generally found in other memoirs. A fascinating chapter about the abduction of Dolly's half-sister Maude was published in the *Anglo-Indian Wallah* last year (<http://www.alphalink.com.au/~agilbert/dolly.html>).

The book may be bought through the publisher, LPP Originals at: <http://www.lppindia.com/>

Other books by the author, writing under her married name, Elizabeth James: *I'll Send You All My Love in a Letter*, *Half Caste*, and *Chronicles of Anglo-Indian Life*.

Footprints on My Heart: Written by **Jennifer Paul**. I have not yet received a copy of this book. The author, born in 1943 in Allahabad, says it is the story of her life as she graduates from childhood to adulthood. It follows her journey through life as a young army officer's wife faced with wars and separation, and the final decision to migrate to Australia leaving her family behind to start a new life with her husband and three sons. With the help of her family she gathered material to establish her ancestry and record her memories of growing up in a family influenced by both western and eastern cultures. For more information, contact Jennifer Paul at: apau6887@bigpond.net.au