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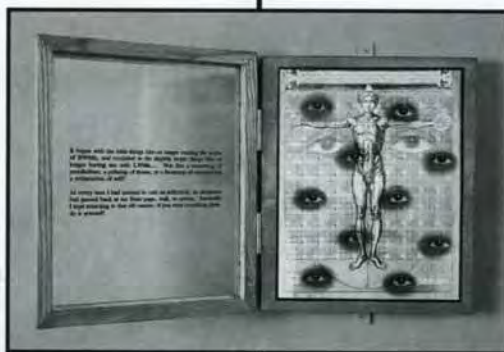
Dear Desh...

Reviews and more



Allan de Souza

It began with the little things like DWMs, and escalated to the slightly sex with LWMs...Was this a of desire, or a focusing of energies turn I had seemed to cast no back at me from page, wall, or screen. that old maxim: if you want



no longer reading the works of larger things like no longer having narrowing of possibilities, a policing and a reclamation of self? At every reflection; no simulacra had peered Inevitably, I kept returning to something done, do it yourself.

Indian Aphorisms



I don't know which of my memories are my own remembrance, which are tales whispered to me secretly as I lay in my bed, or which are ghostly afterimages, effigies petrified between the tissue leaves of photo albums. Which have happened, which are wild imaginings.

Which are yearnings on my part for more memories greater, more colourful than my present existence. An existence in which adventure, possibility, abandon are reined in; a quest not for experience itself, but for representation, a catalogue of experience.



These fragments, these visions played out behind my eyelids, are not just dreams, but imaginings of a place I call home. Home exists... if only within the boundaries of my body. Through these visions, home is extrapolated, given form, moulded into memory. Through

memory, I know these places exist. Who is to say this is delusion? Who will say, to my face, that I have no home, no place I can say I belong to? Just a litany of temporary shelters. Endlessly moving on. Endlessly leaving.

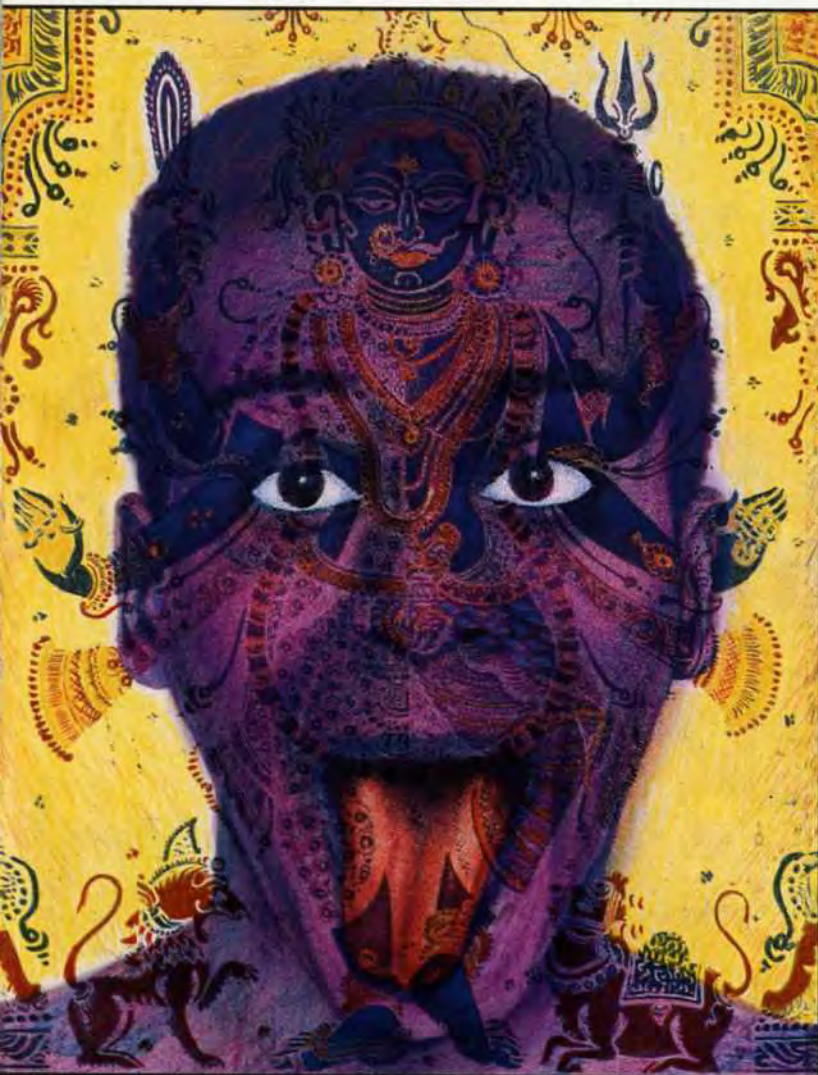


Photo: D. James Dee

We clamoured for re-ownership of the swastika, decrying its desecration, invoked a pantheon of heroines and heroes, Rekha to Rani ki Jhansi, Amitabh to Tipu Sultan; we became more 'desi' than thou, clinging to every last vestige of 'home'; and, alongside our 100% Kashmiri shawls, draped our Indianness brazenly over our shoulders.

Yearning for a passage to an India left behind, some sent bricks to build temples, hopelessly thinking to revive the fallen lotus.

4
What do you see when you look at me? One of a million faces on your TV screen; eyes crawling with flies, brown withered limbs protruding from a distended torso?

What do you see? Smiling dark eyes, nutbrown body, promise of the East? Where am I on your sliding scale from nightmare to fantasy? Or do you see the beauty which radiates when ugliness is shared?

Lover, let me share my ugliness with you, that I may see myself reflected in your eyes as beautiful.



Photo: D. James Dee



6
In all my dislocations and relocations, like a latterday Columbus, I unwittingly bump into America. Bottled, canned, screened, logoed. Surrounding me, confounding me, preventing any backward glance to my mother country, leaving it to its convulsions. America the beautiful, oh,

America the great. Open your arms in paternal welcome to this once pathetic little Indian, this prodigal American son, this potentially prodigious Indian American.



7
The facts of leaving and arriving remembered as physical endurance. Third world smell, noise, heat and mosquitoes of an overnight stop in Cairo. Holding in my shit for two days until a blissful evacuation in the aseptic toilets of en-route Frankfurt Airport; piss-baptizing and

shit-splattering the pristine porcelain: my first rite of passage and entry into the Western Wonderland. Simultaneously my first act of its pollution.

8
City or country, which city
boundaries between one
in their definition—are
Where does one end, and
am I? To say New York,



or which country. The
and another—so fragile
beginning to crumble.
the other begin? Where
USA, conveys little of the

reality, and even less of my own sensing of reality. The question, 'Where
am I?' continues to reverberate in my head, but it is becoming increasingly
obsolete.

9
The physical leaving of 'home' was an event so large, so traumatic
within my imagination that it has passed into mythology. Like Rama banished into
the wilderness, I believed that one day I would return to reclaim all that
was 'mine.' And yet, the
was also the place of desire.



that it was not; loss and gain
for living there—here—was

wilderness, the place of exile
Simultaneously everything
together. And the condition
to live, think and feel this

simultaneity. It has become a joke between us that I always surprise

10
you. Each time you are surprised, I try to explain myself, and each time I
feel more of a stranger. Who is this person you know? It isn't me. We make
virtue out of honesty and shatter each other's every experience, every
perception and mould them to our own schemes. When did truth stop
being a virtue and become instead malicious manipulation? To assert

my version of events
with you, or at least
form of warfare than the



would mean doing battle
engaging in a different
one we already wage.