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## New Delhi

Posted by theguy - 2008/11/18 03:33

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I awoke suddenly, without provocation, from a dreamless sleep; alert yet confused. The over-starched feel of the bedspread was enough to know that I was in a hotel.

“Montreal?” I mused, aloud perhaps, perhaps not.

As my bare feet met the cheap carpet I remembered. New Delhi. The muscles in my abdomen twisted upon my realization that I was seventy three hundred miles from familiarity. The knot persisted through the walk downstairs, past the deserted lobby, onto the courtyard, and did not cease until the third of ten local newspapers I was to read as I passed the hours until daylight.

The moon was full and brown. The air felt thick, like tropic humidity, as a result of unbridled exhaust fumes and the local’s wanton propensity for burning tires.

One can learn a great deal about a people by reading their newspapers. Although these were written in English, they contained not a scant amount of odd, idiosyncratic prose, which made obvious the fact that I was in the other of the two hemispheres. The content and subject of the articles reinforced that fact.

“22 yr. old woman jumps from roof top, bare footed, and survives.”

“25 yr. old woman hangs herself in brothers bedroom.”

“Two men set a shopkeeper on fire.”

My mind wandered to events preceding dinner. Walking through the streets of New Delhi, an experience, although imaginable, is impossible to prepare for, especially for a boy from the middle grade vestiges of Fairfield County. Which is ironic, considering the similarity in dichotomy of northeastern India, and east-of-reason southern Connecticut.

Jens, Will and I followed our porter’s directions “up two blocks” to an ATM. The route to the desired cash machine was far more circuitous than his directions would lead you to believe. We entered a claustrophobia-inducing teashop in search of some arcane flower which upon submersion into boiling water blossoms and releases a purple tea divine in appearance and taste.

An urban matador taunted a stray dog with a rag. Cows blithely roamed the streets taking full advantage of the hierarchy of creatures in Hindu nations. Children chased one another, chasing motorcycles chasing children. Rickshaws carried the most velocity through the streets, on collision courses, through poorly delineated, if not completely ambiguous lanes.

It was difficult to tell where the sidewalk ended and the shops began. They seemed to flow into and onto one another without any regard for separation. The contents of motorcycle repair shops and carpenters workshops spilled onto the street.

Cars passed by giving those in their path the ultimatum of yield or be maimed. Initially I found their presence on such narrow roads foolishly optimistic. Their tactic, however, proved very effective.

Throughout our wandering there existed a subtle hiss unknown foods in hot oil.

The smell of diesel fumes and turmeric permeated the air, and after two weeks too our pours, on account of our new diet.

There existed a palpable energy in New Delhi. You feel a lurking nebulous evil approaching from behind, while presented with an intense and over-stimulating maelstrom directly in front. It appealed to me; the excitement. My band-mates, however, did not share my enthusiasm.

By chance we reached our destination, withdrew a substantial wad of Rupees whose actual value was far from impressive, and began the long walk back to The Metropolitan. My compulsive need to walk in front of Jens and Will reaffirmed their impression of me as a dismissive, narcissistic yet benevolent bandleader.

Our flight to Kathmandu was to leave at noon the following day. And so ended our frivolous jaunt, and began our first international tour.

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