

The Tower Enigma

Next to my sarang/lair/hideout/office is this water tower that over the years has grown to symbolize isolation, solitude, pride, high-mindedness, detachment, a man comfortable with himself, his limitations, his dreams. I see me, at different times of the day, of the hour even, in changing moods, from elation to apathy, and the numerous shades in between. In the sarang I have contemplated my place in the scheme of things, have painted scores of paintings, written poems, articles, and stories, even completed two novels. When my mind is exhausted, my fingers numbed, I glance out the window: how white, round, perfect, catching the afternoon sun with ease, casting deep shadows beneath the jutting balcony, telling me it can weather the mightiest rain-storms, cool the cruelest draft of the December drought. The whiteness invigorates, reassures, and heals. The tower marks my own lack of fortitude, my unending search for the enigma of rootedness. I have finished seven paintings in a projected series of forty from different angles and times of night and day, hoping to learn along the way to take things one at a time, to imbibe the wisdom of staying put.

Zakaria Ali
8 September 2003
12.48 noon

