



❖ Don Quixote : A sketch by Picasso

From review of the novel, Don Quixote : ' With Don Quixote, Cervantes has accomplished an enduring act of literary alchemy: just as Quixote is combined with Sancho, so is fantasy combined with reality, the eternal with the everyday, and like the combination of matter and anti-matter, the explosion of aesthetic power is, in magnitude, infinite, propelling readers from the earth--at first facing inward at what was left behind on the page, then, forgetting the earth, outward into meaning--farther and farther toward the dream-like stars'

(For me, this story is important because it simultaneously brings out the significance of two fundamentally differing world views - epitomized by say, a John Galt on one side and a Holden Caulfield on the other. I think Nirvana is probably a stage in which you can live with seriousness and dedication of John Galt and at the same time be as light hearted and full of doubts as Holden Caulfield: Shailesh)

- ❖ **Sardar sarovar : A poem by Gulzar** : <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ye7qb3X5gEo>

Only a poet of Gulzar's caliber can convey so much about a very complex issue in so few words!

- ❖ **'The worlds of M. Krishnan' : By Ramchandra Guha**

M. Krishnan (1912-1996) was a writer, naturalist, 'ecological patriot' and an avid nature photographer, with diverse range of interests. His writings on India's wild life are among the most readable ever written in English. Selected parts of this writing have been published in a book titled 'Nature's Spokesman', edited by Ramchandra Guha. The excerpt below is written by Guha as an introduction to this book.

I have before me a New Year's card for 1994. It has been made by an eighty-one year old man for his ninety one year old sister. He lives in steamy Madras, she in Mysore, the town on the Carnatic Plateau, which (he remembers) can be Arctic in December – January. He is an artist, and so is she. To mark this, and the weather in Mysore, the card begins with his portrait of a bird in flight, its red beak and red legs and white and black wings etched against a blue sky. It is a White Stork, says the artist, helpfully providing his Latin and Tamil names too.

And why the White Stork? 'Cant you see the connection?' asks the artist to his sister. He reminds her of the address, offered some fourteen centuries previously; by the poet Saththi-muththappulavar to the bird as it passed Madurai en route to its winter grounds in Kanyakumari. One column then prints the poem in Tamil, the letters and words flawlessly formed, the other column offers a translation in English, in a typed draft scored over with handwritten corrections. The poet had asked the stork 'with coral-red beak sharp-tapered like a split Palmyra stalk' that if it should halt, on its return journey northwards, at the tank of his home village, Sanththimuththam, it should seek out his wife in her wet walled leaky hut, there listening 'to gecko's whinnying voice for augury of my return' and

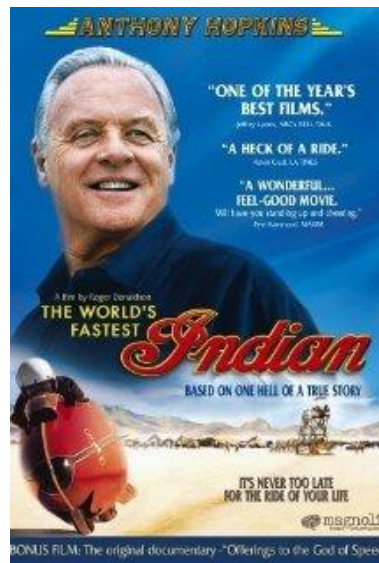
*'Tell her that you saw this abject being
In Madurai, capital of the Pandya King,
Grown thin with no clothes against the north wind's bite,
Hugging his torso with his arms,
Clasping his body with up bent legs,
Barely existing
Like the snake within its basket'*

Some family news follows, and then, at the end of the card, is a portrait in colour of the unhappy poet. 'The stork is quite accurate, comments the artist, but 'I should not have attempted an impression of the poet – in my depiction, he looks more like a toad in a hole than a snake in a basket, though the foetal position must be correct.'

This New Year's card was sent by M. Krishnan to his sister Muthu. It is a period piece, in the precise sense of the term 'an object or work whose main interest lies in its historical etc. associations' (as defined by the Concise Oxford Dictionary) – an object or work that could only be sent or received by one born before the First World War. The card continues a conversation conducted over decades between two old people of culture, learning, sensitivity and *style*. It is also a handsome demonstration of the talents that made Krishnan the finest naturalist and nature writer in the land. In this private communication as in his printed oeuvre, we find a distinctive combination of great skill, exceptional self confidence, and obsessive perfectionism. We see at work the artist, scholar and writer, the man who would single handedly annul the distinctions made by academics between nature and culture or literature and science. Even the showing off- the pedantic precision of the stork's Latin name, *Ciconia ciconia ciconia* – is in character.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about this card, however, is that Krishnan made it in the knowledge that it might never reach Mysore. For there was a postal strike on in December 1993, and, as he told Muthu, 'Only the good god knows when you will get it or, with unskilled replacements for the regular postal workers, if you will get it at all '. The card was produced out of affection for his sister, certainly, but also for the sheer joy of it. It was made by a man in love with his calling, a man with a supreme unconcern for what the world thought of him.

❖ 'The world's fastest Indian' : A movie starring Anthony Hopkins



'It is never too late for the ride of your life':

FROM IMDB : A very quirky and funny movie based on the life story of New Zealander Burt Munro, who spent years modifying an 'Indian' make motorcycle manufactured in 1920, to set the land-speed world record at Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats in 1967.

For 25 years in Invercargill at the south end of New Zealand, Burt Munro (1899-1978) has been working on increasing the speed of his motorcycle, a '1920 Indian'. He dreams of taking it to the Bonneville Salt Flats in USA to see how fast it will go. By the early 1960s, heart disease threatens his life, so he mortgages his house and takes a boat to Los Angeles, buys an old car, builds a makeshift trailer, gets the Indian through customs, and heads for Utah. Along the way, people he meets are charmed by his open, direct friendliness. If he makes it to Bonneville, will they let an old guy on the flats with makeshift tires, no brakes, and no chute? And will the Indian actually respond?

About 'Treasures'

It's a compilation that I put together every once in a while, of things that I have found to be beautiful and meaningful.

Do share it with others who you think will enjoy it.

Drop me an email at shaileshd.email@gmail.com if you want to add someone to the circulation list.

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