

Adyar Newsletter

MAY 2008



Copperpod blossoms carpet the path around Blavatsky Bungalow

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY, ADYAR, CHENNAI, INDIA

TWO SPECIAL FESTIVALS

The *Adyar Newsletter* will be circulated around White Lotus Day, celebrated on 8 May, and the Wesak (Vaisakh) Festival, celebrated this year on 20 May. Let us then learn about these occasions and be ready to participate in them in thought and, if possible, in attendance.

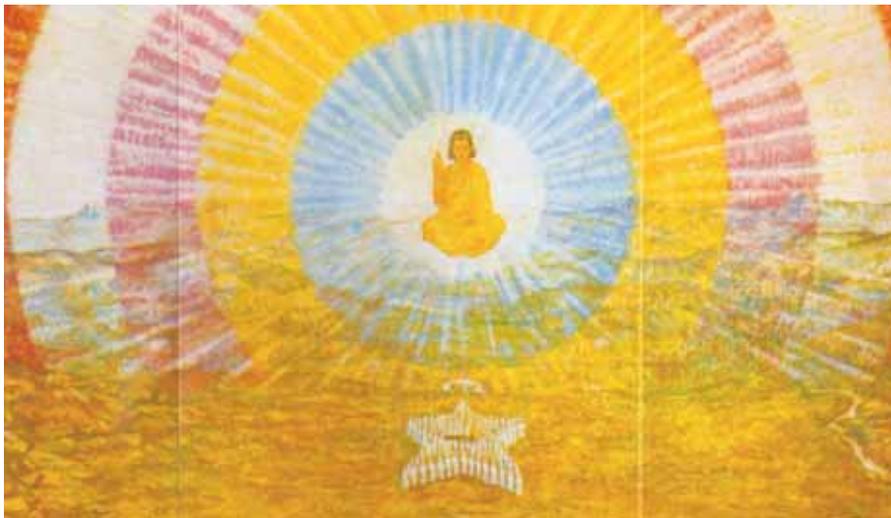
The former is the annual tribute to the memory of Mme Blavatsky, the Light Bringer, and others who have recently laid aside their bodies to rest awhile and return. In early days, short speeches were delivered by those who had the privilege of knowing HPB. This act of remembrance is but one of a chain which will gradually encircle the globe, for the Society begun by one woman's courage and devotion is now worldwide. The meeting closes today, as it did then, with an offering of flowers 'in token of love, reverence and gratitude to a lion-hearted leader'.

The second festival commemorates the Buddha's enlightenment, and his passing from earthly life. On this day, it is said, he still year by year revisits the earth to shed



White lotus from the Adyar Buddhist Temple pond

his blessing. The Buddhists of Tibet know a holy valley on the Himalayan slopes where numberless pilgrims await His shadow at the moment of full moon. (See frontispiece illustration below from C. W. Leadbeater's *The Masters and the Path*.) During the hours before and after the moment of full moon, we may sense the wondrous benediction which is poured alike on all who are able to receive it. (Notes from the *Adyar Bulletin*, vol. 18.6, pp. 164-5.)



The Wesak Valley

SUMMER TREATS AT ADYAR

The city of Chennai, some say, has only three seasons: hot, hotter, and hottest. Adyar, being a part of this city, faces the same weather conditions. In mid-April, we are heading towards our hottest season, which begins around the end of March and goes on till mid-June, when we have the first showers of the south-west monsoon.

Long days and relatively shorter nights; hot and sweltering days and comparatively cooler evenings (once the sea breeze sets in); the wish to remain indoors and the necessity to step out into the hot day to fulfil one's many duties — these are some of the things one normally associates with summers at Adyar.

This is also the period when most Lodges take their summer break (May to July every year) as local members and residents on the TS estate seek the cooler climes of the Nilagiri Hills or the Himalayan Ranges for a vacation to escape the hot and humid heat of a typical Chennai summer.

And yet not all Nature dreads the summer. On the contrary, She and her 'lesser children' await the onset of the heat, for a new cycle begins each year with the summer. The first intimation of summer begins in mid-February with the cashew blossoms. Suddenly, the air is filled with the mild cinnamon-like fragrance of deep-red clumps of the cashew nut florets, especially towards the evening.

This is followed by the shedding of leaves of the tamarind trees and new leaves appearing, accompanied by lime-green flowers speckled with deep-pink centres. Soon the flowers will turn into tamarind fruits, but by themselves they are a sight to

behold — dainty, small, orchid-like flowers that refresh the eyesight like balm. The beginning of March sees deep-brown tamarind pods littering the roadside, while the trees themselves with their dense foliage provide an excellent harbour for the meanderers of Adyar.

The beginning of March also sees the



Copperpod in bloom (*Peltophorum pterocarpum*)

copperpod tree coming forth with its gift of yellow-blossomed carpets spread all over the holy earth of Adyar. Another shade-providing tree, the copperpod litters the earth beneath it with mildly fragrant flowers early in the morning.

Not to be left behind in this fragrant 'race', if one may call it that, the rain tree, frangipani parijata tree, and Rangoon jasmine vine produce strong yet fragrant flowers as their gift to the world. The Rangoon jasmine is at its best in the afternoons, while the parijata takes over the nights, and the rain tree and frangipani the dawns and mornings, after which the flowers begin to wilt.

But fragrances are not the only treats of the flora of Adyar. Bougainvilleas and hibiscuses of every hue vie with one another as though dressed in their Sunday best.

Bougainvillea bushes with blossoms of white, light yellow, peach, orange, crimson, and fuchsia, and hibiscuses (or shoe flowers) in white, peach, pink and red provide a visual treat to visitors and residents alike. The silk cotton tree puts forth its deep red blossoms; the ashoka tree is dressed in pale green and bright orange; the tabebuia pours forth blossoms of violet and pink; the medicinal neem is a profusion of little white stars — nay, flowers; the golden bell and showers of yellow laburnum; the pale green clusters of the mango tree; the coral tree with its coral or white flowers; deep orange clusters adorn a few trees; ixoras in clusters of white, orange and red; the morning glory vines with their bright blue flowers; the cacti have burst out with yellow, orange, and white flowers; amaryllis in peach and red; wild flowers in pink, lilac, white, pale yellow; the African tulip adorned with blooms of bright orange; and the king of them all, the flame of the forest, setting the whole estate afire with its bright red and variegated flowers. Colours adorn the summers of Adyar like a bride dressed for marriage.



African tulip (*Spathodea campanula*)

mature to a deep yellow and, suddenly, one day new leaves shoot forth that mature from deep burgundy to light green to a darker green, the 'clothes' it will wear for the rest of the year. The canonball, pipal, banyan, ashoka, and rain trees likewise change their foliage from old to new in the early months of summer, charging the atmosphere of the estate with a sense of freshness, newness, birth, and life.

And where there are these many bright flowers, can the insect kingdom be far behind? The air is rent with the buzzing of bees, wasps, and butterflies of many varieties and colours, which set about the task of collecting nectar and building their hives and nests. The black wasp buzzes into our offices searching for holes to fill with her smooth white home, once she's laid her eggs in them. The slightly bigger brown wasp silently builds a hive with its family, working as a team, to build a hive of paper-like appearance. The larger brown wasp brings mud from the gardens to cement a home with its saliva for its young on any available space, especially doors and window frames. Butterflies in white, pale blue, pale yellow, orange, brown, and black can be seen flitting from flower to flower in search of food, thereby pollinating the food



Cactus on Blavatsky Drive (*Pereskia aculeata*)

Summer is also when many trees 'change their clothes' and don new ones. The stately mahogany sheds its leaves from mid-February to mid-April. The bare branches are then covered with pale green catkins that

sources they visit. Diamond-backed beetles are to be seen in pairs or groups milling around nuts, seeds and dogturds, clearing away the roads. After the first shower of summer in mid-April, the speckled red-headed caterpillar can be seen winding its way across the road, and the cicada can be heard for miles around chirruping away from a branch of a tree.

Flowers soon give way to fruits, both edible and inedible for humans. Mid-March brings forth eggplant-coloured star sapotas, which are fleshy white fruits with black seeds, and jackfruit, thorny green-coloured, yellow-centred fruit with a heady smell. Then come the sapotas or chikkus with their sweet fleshy brown fruits. Mangoes, mostly of the indigenous, local varieties, begin to hang on their trees ready to be plucked as they turn from their unripe green colour to ripe golden yellow. This is also the season for sweet custard apples and the orange-yellow papayas. Mmmm....

And just as flowers attract the insect world, fruits attract the avian and animal worlds. The brainfever bird starts to call out its incessant 'brainfever' at about 2:30 am. Most of the estate is asleep at that early hour, except for the occasional howl of a jackal, or of a lizard in the darkness. The owls on our campus are a rather silent lot, though they can be heard screeching past on occasion during their nocturnal hunt for food.

The crows begin to waken at about five in the morning and their cawing can be heard throughout the day. They are often

seen on the banyan trees making a meal of the bright red berries hanging in profusion, and squabbling with the rosy-ringed parakeets — which also seem to have a liking for these fruits — or holding a council of crows atop a big tree, usually the banyan; they can be quite noisy at such times.

The seven sisters or common babblers crowd around, looking for worms in the mud/sand, or for other titbits on the trees. The kingfisher lets out its whistle-like call and the bulbul an incessant cuk-cuk-cuk-cuuk. The woodpecker can be heard diligently boring a hole into a tree. The koel musically calls out to its mate. This is the avian mating season, and one can see them building their nests on high branches among the thick foliage. Hoopoes and mynahs are seen in twos and threes looking for food on the ground. Yellow wattled lapwings fly around calling 'Did-'e-do-it'. A bird carries a twig in its beak to a high branch; another has a white feather clamped in its beak as it ascends the roof of a building. The iridescent sunbirds can be seen hovering near a black- or red-berried shrub. Squirrels run about here and there in search of delectable nuts.

Such are the treats of summer at Adyar — a bouquet of fragrances, a floral fantasy, a harmonious chorus of many sounds, and a basket of fruits aplenty; for, in summer, 'Nature', to borrow a phrase from the Ritual of the Mystic Star, 'sings a paean of joy'. In summer, Adyar truly is a paradise on earth, notwithstanding the sweltering heat.

The time will come when humanity and the inner forces of Nature will work together in conscious cooperation. We need to reawaken the power within us to communicate and cooperate with the inner side of Nature for the healing of ourselves and our planet as together we grow into the conscious realization that WE ARE ALL ONE.

Coleen McIvor

THE SOUTH INDIA CONFERENCE

One hundred and fifty delegates enrolled this year for the Eighty-fifth South India Conference, held at Adyar as usual during Easter weekend, 21–23 March, the first of these being a holy day for members of several religious faiths:

Good Friday: occasion of divine sacrifice

Milad un Nabi: The Prophet's birthday

Panguni Uthiram: Tamil festival

Holi: in honour of Krishna

Jamshedi Nauroze: Persian New Year

The theme 'Unfoldment of the Inner Nature' was introduced by the international President, Mrs Radha Burnier, who emphasized the fact that what matters most during the conference is that we are one in spirit — and many felt this influence throughout.

Prof. R. C. Tampi led the course saying

we are apt to forget the divinity within us. As with the sculptor's stone, excrescences are to be removed that divinity may be revealed.

During the seven sessions, with two speakers each, many themes inspired the audience to embark upon the journey: hearts beating in harmony; transcendence; release from the prison house; establishing an inner attitude to life; the way of love; reverence for all; until truth arises from within; the wise find the eternal in silence; the necessity for discipline; listen to the Voice of the Silence; become Thyself; fallen angels rise to Selfhood; unveil the mystery of life. Each session was followed by interaction.

The evening programmes were the Ritual of the Mystic Star, wherein religions are revered in congregational worship; and community singing. A worthwhile and unifying occasion.

IT'S CASHEW NUT TIME

The Adyar campus is home to many fruit trees, including the cashew (*Anacardium occidentale*, from the family Anacardiaceae), of which Adyar has many. Trees bear flowers

and fruits once a year, typically in April and May, but all trees are nurtured the year round, regardless of whether they bear fruit or not. Nature responds kindly by giving us fruits and nuts in plenty year after year.

Garden workers make rounds all day long to collect the fruits in teams of fours and fives, going together to different areas of the estate. The fruits are not plucked from the tree, but shaken down, the ripe ones falling to the ground, where they are gathered and hauled away in wheelbarrows and sacks. These fruits are red, yellow, and orange, each with a seed attached to the bottom. Beside the Garden



Raw cashew nuts being separated from the fruit

Office, the seed, or raw cashew, is separated from the fruit, and this seed, when dried under the sun, becomes the raw material for the cashew industry. At this time of the year, visitors to our campus are able to enjoy the lovely sight of beautiful fruit and seeds spread

out to dry in front of the Garden Office.

Fruits are sometimes eaten raw by local villagers, as apples are, with the bulk of them being given back to Nature. Birds and squirrels and myriads of creatures around us make the best use of them. To be in Adyar at this time is fruitful indeed for many of us.

BON VOYAGE, SUSHAMA

Our good wishes are with Sushama Sreenath, who will shortly begin a new phase in her life across the seas. Sushama will soon join her husband, fellow-Theosophist Simon Webber of Wellington Lodge in New Zealand. His gain is our loss, for Sushama was ever ready to come to the aid of anyone who needed her skills, advice or help at Adyar.

Born into a Theosophical family and a fourth generation Theosophist on her mother's side, Sushama became a member of the TS at the tender age of eleven, and since then has attended nearly every international Convention at Adyar. After her graduation in Art History, she came to work at Adyar for a couple of years, contributing her artistic and other skills in editorial work for the Theosophical Publishing House. She took a break of a few years, during which she obtained a Master's Degree in Art from Santiniketan, the prestigious university started by Sri Rabindranath Tagore, near Kolkata, but was back again to add her strength and



talents to the work in Adyar. Always cheerful, always willing, always doing more than was required of her, she has been a source of strength in the Editorial Office these past three years. We shall miss her.

Let all the strains of joy mingle in my last song — the joy that makes the earth flow over in the riotous excess of the grass, the joy that sets the twin brothers, life and death, dancing over the wide world, the joy that sweeps in with the tempest, shaking and waking all life with laughter, the joy that sits still with its tears on the open red lotus of pain, and the joy that throws everything it has upon the dust, and knows not a word.

Rabindranath Tagore

DONATIONS TO THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

(1 January to 31 March 2008)

PRESIDENT'S DISCRETIONARY FUND		Rs.	ADYAR ESTATE IMPROVEMENT FUND		Rs.
Mrs G.K. Ajeet, India		520	Mr N. Asokan, India		500
Ms Diana Ratnagar, India		25000	Mr Antonio Girardi, Italy	€ 500	27553
Mr Kiran H. Shah, Kenya	US\$ 130	<u>4955</u>	The TS in Italy	€ 1,000	55105
		<u>30475</u>	Mr Pedro Aguas, Spain	€ 100	5511
GENERAL DONATIONS			Bilbao Lodge, Spain	€ 85	4684
Mr Mohanlal Khatri & Smt Lalita Milwani, India		500	TS in Finland	€ 200	11021
Smt Protima Ghosh, India		3000	Lodge Mahatma KH, Italy	€ 100	5568
Mayfair Lodge, India		1000	Ms Marie Brennan, Australia	AUS\$ 200	7180
Ms Mary Anderson, India		1000	Mrs Barbara Harrod, Australia	AUS\$ 50	1795
Mrs Dolores Gago, India		2500	Mrs Jean Carroll, Australia	AUS\$ 170	<u>6103</u>
Davanagere Lodge, India		1000			<u>125020</u>
TS in Finland	€ 200	11021	GARDEN DEVELOPMENT FUND		
Miss Tran Thi Kim Dieu, France	€ 400	22042	Mis Julia Grice, UK	£ 10	<u>769</u>
Ms Wies Kuiper, Netherlands	€ 100	5609	ABC FUND		
Mr Abraham Oron, Israel	US\$ 70	2687	EDUCATION FUND		
Mr Abraham Oron, Israel	€ 45	2505	Mr Ujjwal Vithal Parmanand, India		<u>100000</u>
Minerva Financial Services, England	£ 3000	230950	EDUCATION ENDOWMENT FUND		
Mr Jean Nalonga, Africa	US\$ 30	1178	Mrs Nano Leguay, France	€ 300	16532
Institute for Shipboard Education, USA	US\$ 100	<u>3928</u>	Miss Tran Thi Kim Dieu, France	€ 100	<u>5511</u>
		<u>288920</u>			<u>24043</u>
SOCIAL WELFARE FUND			SCHOOL OF THE WISDOM FUND		
Miss Tran Thi Kim Dieu, France	€ 450	24797	Mr Hans J. von Lengerke, Germany	€ 150	8351
TS in America	US\$ 2000	<u>80108</u>	Mrs Malati Ramratnam, USA	US\$ 101	3987
		<u>104905</u>	Mrs Fern Grant, Canada	US\$ 40	<u>1528</u>
ADYAR LIBRARY FUND					<u>13866</u>
Mr M.B. Pranesh, India		<u>1025</u>	ADYAR DAY		
ANIMAL WELFARE FUND			Adyar Lodge, India	2000	951
Arjuna Lodge, Barcelona, Spain	€ 210	<u>11572</u>	Mrs Aloo M. Lalvani, India	500	300
			Miss Maya M. Lalvani, India	500	1500
			Dr C.V. and Mrs Gyanwati Agarwal, India	250	860
			Mr C. Raja Shiva Shankar, India	1000	250
			Sangli Lodge & Miraj Lodge, India	560	340
			Sri Satchidananda Lodge, India	200	500
			Bihar Federation, India	100	500
			Rohit Lodge, India	401	700
			Shanthi Lodge, India	675	2000
			Anand Lodge and Mahila Dharm Lodge, India	360	1002
			Bangarapet Lodge, India	1000	1001
			Sri Krishna Lodge, India	200	250
			Akot Lodge, India	100	1000
			Shri Harjivan Ashram Lodge, India	200	1000
			Sri Agastya Lodge, India	1000	110
			The Indian Section, India	451	1750
			Rewa Lodge, India	1160	700
			Chinthamani Lodge, India	790	1500
			Chickballapur Lodge, India	410	450
			Sarvodhaya Lodge, India	500	52671
			Jnana Bharathi Lodge, India	325	<u>8266</u>
					<u>90283</u>
			Nagpur Lodge, India		
			Shri Ramachandra Lodge, India		
			Bellary Sanmaraga Lodge, India		
			Ahmedabad Lodge, India		
			Malegaon Lodge, India		
			Vijayawada Lodge, India		
			Maitreya Lodge, India		
			Hasanamba Lodge, India		
			Delhi Federation, India		
			Lakshmikantha Lodge, India		
			Kotturu Lodge, India		
			Begur Lodge, India		
			Mr C.P. Kumar Gupta, India		
			Haveri Lodge, India		
			Vasishtha Lodge, India		
			Junjaragunte Lodge, India		
			Utkal Federation, India		
			Visakhapatnam Lodge, India		
			Vikram Lodge, India		
			Nittur Lodge, India		
			TS in America	US\$ 1315	52671
			Miss Tran Thi Kim Dieu, France	€ 150	<u>8266</u>
					<u>90283</u>

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