

Blavatsky on the Monsoon



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The following is reprinted *verbatim et literatim* from a clipping in one of General Abner Doubleday's scrapbooks in the archives of the former Point Loma Theosophical Society. It is clear from the heading "Banner Correspondence" that it was originally published in *The Banner of Light*. No date is attached to the clipping, but from other clippings pasted in the same scrapbook the date is undoubtedly 1879.

Banner Correspondence

Bombay, India

From a private letter forwarded [to] us by Mad. Helen P. Blavatsky we take the liberty of extracting the following graphic description of matters climatic in this land of the sun — prefacing our action with the announcement that we have on file a lengthy letter from this talented lady, which we propose to publish at our earliest opportunity.

Do you know what *the monsoon* is? And if aware of its nature, are you prepared to say that you are as well acquainted with all its peculiarities, progress, development and results upon humanity in general, and lymphatic, slow-blooded folks in particular? My private and archaeological opinion is that it is one of such monsoons that Father Noah — whom I suspect of having been a low-caste Hindu — mistook, in some fit of intoxication, for the universal deluge, and thus was allowed to impose upon credulous Christo-Judaic humanity, and perplex geology for many ages. Well, the monsoon begins about the 15th of June, and ends about the 15th of October. In the previous long interval of eight months not a drop of rain ever falls on the blistered noses of the sweating millions of "mild" Hindus, to solace their parched souls. But as, in their character of "benighted heathen," they have to prepare for Christian hell anyhow, it does not much matter. But when it does come it is a caution, I tell you! It can no more be called a rain than the Niagara Falls a shower. The streets and yards and gardens and compounds and even the rooms in the houses are flooded. Bombay is changed for days, sometimes weeks, into a semblance of Venice *la Bella*. Hindus do not care; for, naked to the waist, they promenade about in the dry season, and, naked to a completer degree, they paddle about in water during the monsoon. It's all one for them. But for unfortunate visitors from other and drier spheres, like our "Theosophical mission," as we are called here, it is a matter of more than a serious consideration. Everything from roof to floor in the houses; from furniture to wearing apparel; hats, boots, brushes, *etc., etc.*, becomes damp as a soaked rag, moulds and finally rots away, if neglected. I have to dry every one of my several hun-

dred books over a brazier every second or third day; and our party, I was going to say, has almost to sit under an umbrella half the time in our drawing-room! But this is not all. The fields, jungles, and the crevices in the rocks being overflowed, the cobra-capellas, scorpions, centipedes, lizards, and in some places tigers, begin running a race for salvation, and take refuge in the houses, most of which, like our own bungalow, have no sashes to the windows, but simply a few wooden bars. It is the real Darwinian season, in which the law of the “survival of the fittest” is most apparent. Every night I have to make the round in my solitary bungalow, which is nestled under a canopy of coconut trees, and surrounded by bananas and large shrubs, and I feel particularly happy whenever I have succeeded in committing any amount of cruel murders. I become a bloodthirsty Nimrod, and kill cockroaches as big as small mice, spiders which could be mistaken for moderate-sized crabs, and crush to death about a thousand or so of various smaller insects nightly. Alas! I can never hope for a snug place in the calendar of either Jain or Buddhist saints. But, as I said to you, it is the survival of the fittest; and if we would survive we have to give fits to our *brothers* of the animal kingdom. We all have our share in this world of sorrow.

