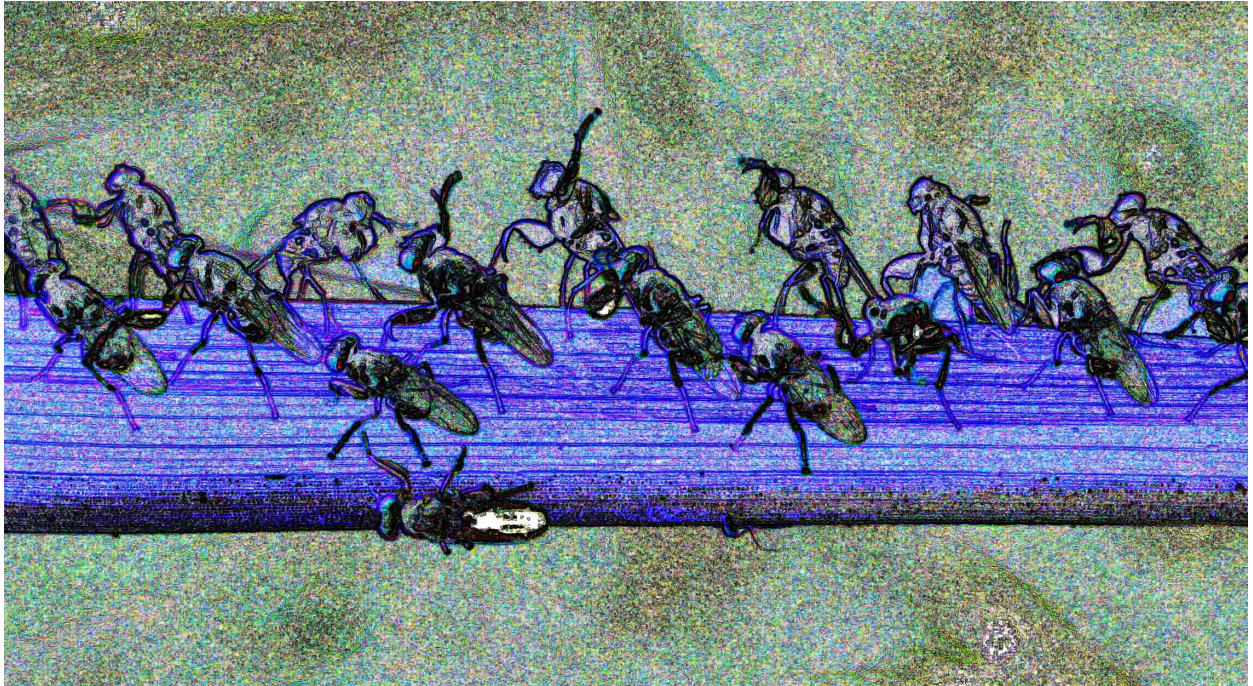


# Dispatch from the Plant Underground

## Dispatch 10: A plenum of greetings

January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011



Dear Friends,

Happy (belated) New Year to all you lovely people!

There are many here today who join me in this special greeting. I'd like to include every voice I discern in what appears to be a clamour of joy on this cool and bright morning. I am walking into the forest from the grassland, following the golden light, in the wake of a dazzling parade of colourful creatures: each one aglow from the rays of the rising sun slanting through the canopy. I write this with a pen in a notebook: soggy from a zillion dewdrops off a zillion hairs of a hundred thousand furry blades of grass.

It is impossible to keep pace with all that is rushing to enter this pen to resound in your lives wherever you may be.

Once again, dear friends: Happy New Year, All!

May you and yours, have a great year, rich and blazingly alive, in friendship with all beings of the earth.

But wait! I've just walked into the garden.

A garden that is a universe unto itself the second you step into it, a universe sparkling with a plenum of plant stars.

Here they are, the multitudinous nodding stars of a universe of plants. Once inside the wood, you feel only them, there are only plants! an endless universe of nodding sparkling plants! And this universe of plants that can be walked through in less time than it takes to write these words, sends its sparkling greetings to you.

In turn:

The *Impatiens* (all 80 species, and tens of thousands of individuals),  
 The orchids (all 700 species, and tens of thousands of individuals),  
 The ferns (all 300 species, millions of sporelings and all gametophytes bearing these millions of sporeling individuals),

All trees (all individuals of all 100 species belonging to dozens of different families, specially the *Elaeocarpus*, the *Prunus*, the *Artocarpus* and the *Mesua*),

All woody and soft climbers (the *Gnetum*, the *Watakaka*, the *Mucuna*, the *Gardenia*, the *Aristolochia* and the aroids),

All shrubs (the *Strobilanthes*, the *Thottea*, the *Justicia*, the *Stenosiphonium*, the *Chasalia* and *Pousolzia* and *Lasianthus*),

All epiphytes,

All lithophytes,

All species of moss, all species of liverwort, and their millions of individuals,

All saprophytes,

All hemiparasites and parasites,

All carnivores.

####

The two species of hornworts in their tiny scattered clusters,

The thousands, if not tens of thousands of symbionts of lichen,

The thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, if not millions of species of fungi,

The thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, if not millions of species of bacteria.

Plenum!

Like the universe, the more you see: the more you see. The dark interior is fuller than you could ever imagine.

Happy New Year to all friends from all Sanctuarians.

####

And the birds, oh the birds! The clamour is raucous, insistent, impossibly joyous!

I wish you were here right now on this walk: could a heart be happier than mine surrounded as I am at every level of the forest by this gleeful feathered movement?!

Of the 240 species living in or visiting the Sanctuary, here are the ones I've just met, singing and calling as I walk, flashing their iridescent colours at me:

Racket-tail drongoes and black drongoes,  
Scimitar babblers and the puff throated babblers,  
The red whiskered bulbuls and yellow browed bulbuls,

Fairy blue birds: their plumage a blue flash in the morning sun,  
Scarlet minivets: yellow females and orange males,  
Leaf birds: green, so green,  
Yellow cheeked tits,

The crested serpent eagle wheeling in the dawn sky,  
The barbets,  
The crow pheasant,  
The crow,

The flycatchers: so beautiful and elegant and light,  
The orange headed ground thrush,  
The trogons: a plum-red male and a rust-orange female,  
The woodshrike with a grasshopper in his bill,  
The nuthatches: sweetly skittering up and down tree trunks,  
The golden backed woodpeckers: hammering and screeching,  
The heart spotted woodpecker,  
The jungle mynahs, squealing and whistling,  
And, of course, the hornbills.

Happy New Year to all of you: from those aflight in today's incandescent air.

It feels like everybody is here today, it is so full: the Sanctuary is so very full!

Plenum!

###

And I didn't mention the tree nymph butterflies,  
Or the bonnet macaques,  
Or the sunbathing keelback snakes,  
Or the leaping grasshoppers,  
Or the hunting ratsnakes,  
Or the zithering cicadas,  
Or the sweet frogs on the trail with their limpid eyes,  
Or the poised calotes lizards, Or all the silent invisible ones I know are there, but right now  
preferring to remain unnoticed.

Plenum!

###

The Sanctuary is so very full, and this fullness sends its greetings to you, wherever you may be  
on this earth that once was vastly full, whose fullness is rapidly collapsing, rapidly waning,  
rapidly being murdered and rapidly dying.

Our solidarity with the brave remaining ones,  
And the ones whose lives have already been taken.  
And a pledge this new year, to support  
The earthly plenum.

###

And here are the dogs: Tasha, Falaafel, Gustav, Hoomus, Rao, Marilyn, Polenta, Maxi and Theo;  
And the cows: Christie, Tamara, Cecilia and their calves;  
And the fish: Clarence the eel and his companions, the barbs, the danios, the barils, the sucker  
fish and more;  
And the humans: Wolfgang, Leela, Laly, Suma, Anna, Sandy and Sruti (and their about-to-be-  
born little one), Purvy, Janu, Valsala, Graham, Struppy and Heidi (last three, winter migrants),  
and Biju, Suresh, Shalini, Bina, Rincy, Shanta, Baby, Co-chettan.....and more!

Plenum!

###

Did I forget anyone?

Oh, and the squirrels, and the Nilgiri Langur, and the wild boar and the bandicoot rats, and the slender loris, and the barking deer and the sambhar deer and....the jumping spiders and the velvet ants and the ponerine ants.....and.... the elephants and their babies squelching in the river mud, snapping twigs, whooshing and trumpeting, all just arrived as I wing this off to you.

And me!

(This is why community letters are difficult to write for us: we are so many, how can we fail to include everyone in this greeting?!)

Oh, and I forgot the river, with its greenbrown water flowing from countless seeps in the towering rainforest, with its black stones, and sand grains and fine silts, with its crabs and damselflies and Vateria trees and Schumanianthus and Ochlandra reeds, with its light through the water through every hour of the day, and its crimson kaara leaves mingling with the swirling flowers of so many trees.

Plenum!

###

Dear friends, Happy New Year, to every single one of you and your loved ones: human and non-human!

Our solidarity with the brave remaining ones.  
And the ones whose lives are being taken,  
And our pledge this year to renew:  
The earthly plenum.

With very best wishes

from Suprabha  
and all others

at the Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary

