

Diary: India 1997.

Monday 17th November - Saturday, 13th December.

Hallo my dear family. I am starting to write this account of India 97 on Saturday morning (22nd) in my room in the guest house in Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh at 9 O'clock in the morning. I am hoping that this is a low point in my time here. I came with Surya from Bangalore last night. He had decided that to come, as planned, during the day would waste that day. I think that he has some work to do and this influenced him. He failed to get a sleeping berth on the train, and failed to get an AC (air conditioned) bus [I would have been very happy with a DC bus]. So we came by De Luxe bus. The bus station at Bangalore is a vast area with herds of buses moving randomly about, nudging each other, coughing, belching and occasionally screaming dementedly. Whenever there is a new arrival they try to prevent it finding any place to stop. I have never seen them mate but I assume they must do to produce all the little 3 wheeler autorickshaws. Buses leave every 15 minutes throughout the night to take pilgrims to Tirupati. There was no luggage compartment so my case had to sit in the aisle at the back beside me, over the rear wheels and the exhaust. The rest of the aisle was taken up with sleeping children. Incidentally the name 'de luxe' is given to any form of transport that is not actually broken. It does also indicate that there will be glass in the windows and some tread on the tyres. The seats recline (except mine, of course). The one in front of me was also broken but in flat mode. I spent 6 hours awake alternating cramped, pained knees with pained ankles etc. Surya of course fell instantly asleep, collapsing across me where he remained, trapping one arm, my left foot being trapped as a child's pillow. There was some respite when she woke and bad-temperedly rearranged it to be more comfortable. Both the road and the buses are said to be good; this is true in a relative sort of way, it's just that they are not good for each other. It was not too bad a journey once I became accustomed to the violence of the shaking rattling jumping movements. I seemed to be the only one awake all night. Even the rattling of the pile of cooking pots beside me and the frequent bashing of the tin locker doors failed to lull me to sleep. I tried to listen to a tape on my walkman. This had to be selected at random in the dark from my bag. It was a good choice; Jesse Norman singing Strauss songs. Even at high volume she only occasionally came through, soaring gloriously over the top of an orchestra of tin cans, snoring, hooting, clattering and screeching brakes. I slept for the last 20 minutes of the 6 hour journey and was woken to fight my way out; S had persuaded the driver to stop outside the guest house about 2 miles from the bus stand. We had to pass my 29 kg suitcase over all the sleepers and negotiate our way through the kids on the floor. we tapped on the window to wake one of the 6 sleeping staff who let us in. It is slightly macabre walking between the sleepers as they are wrapped in white grave shrouds which they pull right over their heads. We were shown into my room which is a very bare cell. No curtains but mosquito nets fixed permanently in position by velcro. The windows were open so I could enjoy the traffic. And the new street lights. Surya set off to walk the 2km home and I fell asleep. Two hours later (6.30) I was woken to be asked if I would want breakfast; I agreed it would be a good idea and that I would like puris inflated chapatis swimming in dilute curry soup. As it happened everyone else had these and I had idlis and pakoras. Anyway, I slept for 6.30 till 7.30 when I was woken to sign the visitors book. I gave up at this point and woke. Fortunately the more sensible of the assistant stewards called in to say hello and ask if I was happy with the room. I said I would prefer the large isolated one as it is quieter. No problem he said except that the air conditioning is not working so perhaps you should keep this room. This room had no air conditioning to be broken so I pointed out that there was

little to choose between them in that respect. He said it is not right to give a guest a room in which items were inadequate but he relented and sent a cleaner over to clean (I am only guessing why he sent the cleaner over). I subsequently finished the job by cleaning all surfaces including the filthy cupboards with a wet handkerchief. I then became remarkably organised and completely emptied my case (I usually live out of an unpacked case). Just before I moved into the room as I was writing the first part of this my day moved up fast when Francis arrived. He is fatter and hairier but still as nice (of course). He has a job selling building materials to contractors. He works a 12 hour day cycling all round Tirupati; salary 900 rupees per month (£15). He was delighted with the strings and the tapes of Julian Bream guitar music.

I am typing this at 9 pm to the sound of furious debates from next door (in Telugu) with a feeling of relief. I think I have just avoided a major disaster. I started to write this a bit

earlier and found that all I could get from Wordperfect for windows is an error message. Fortunately I remembered that I have WP for DOS so I am now using that. As I have a lot of writing to do (using previous Wordperfect files) I would have been desperate without this. I have just returned in pouring rain from town where I called into Surya's Computer Institute. The purpose of this was to meet his friends there; one of them is going to get the manual for WP for windows and I am going back tomorrow morning to see if we can solve the problem as the windows programme is easier for some things.

Prof Venkaiah turned up not long after Francis so I arranged my social timetable for tomorrow and went off with the University car to meet the biochemists. They seemed pleased to see me. The first person to welcome me was Nagaraju standing grinning and nodding his head in delight as I appeared. Arranged for him to call in at 4.00 (he specified English time which is usually about one hour more punctual than Indian). After chatting to staff I was taken to be introduced to the students. The 2nd year students knew me so stood happily grinning while others stared blankly; in disbelief I suppose. After a brief speech I was whisked off to Parthasarathy's office to discuss my lectures. Venkaiah has it all under control. The money that the University failed to give me last year has still not been released (only about £20).

I was taken back to Guest house on back of P's scooter to have spicy veggy lunch. I spent the first half of the afternoon sorting out all my stuff and having a hot splash (no shower just big and small buckets). Nagaraju arrived one hour late. His understanding is worse than last year and we often resorted to writing what we had to say. He explained in this rather slow way that he had had a bad year. This was mainly a result of his proposing marriage to one of his classmates. She wanted to know why he was not going the usual route. She seems to like him but since finding that he had discussed her with his friends she has rejected him. This took 2 hours to explain (I slept through much of it). Then walked down to the Institute to see Surya and meet his friends. The dual carriage way road that was being built last year is almost complete and so the walk into town was easy except for the rain. Met Suban on the way. They are building a new part above the present building and so it is necessary to negotiate a building site to get in. The 'Institute' is a blackboard and about 15 chairs and 1 computer plus 4 enthusiastic teachers - all about 26 years old. They are all very good friends and it was very nice to see Surya in his native habitat. I was explaining the problem with my computer and asked Surya "do you understand?" He said "Sir, you are such a wonderful teacher you do not only give us all *understanding* but we have the great experience of *overstanding* also".

Now it is time to produce a record of the trip, so far, in chronological sequence.

I start with a guilty memory - that I left the bedroom in a rather squalid state. Sorry. Perhaps Libby you have looked at the heap of discarded clothes with affectionate

amusement (No?). My chauffeur (Raff) started everything badly by being 20 minutes late (forgotten the day? car would not start? teaching me for taking him for granted? a bit of fun?). Had a nice relaxed drive up with plenty of time. Minor stress when we heard my name indistinctly over the loudspeakers while in the long queue for checking in - a call to the information desk. Raff went off to confirm it was a false alarm. Had breakfast, said goodbye to Raff, and then off to buy presents in duty free.

I managed to find a very nice brooch for Swarna (pressed violets against a green background in an antique silver frame (from Harrods). I just had time to buy chocolate before the last call for the flight. Although no window seat was available when I checked in they put me on the waiting list and I was given not only a window seat but also the two adjacent ones so had a comfortable flight. Had very little sleep as it was only about 10.30 pm when we landed at Madras (now Chennai). Indian time was 4.30 am. As usual my bag was one of the last off and so it was 90 minutes later that I was met by Surya plus his friend who had insisted on coming from his hostel in Madras to the airport. We were just about to get in a taxi and Sivamani appeared also with a friend. I had told him the dates I would be in India but when he showed me the letter I saw that I had emphasised that there was no point in meeting in Madras and that he should come to Tirupati for a couple of days. He had decided he must see me so came to the airport at 4.30 am. He is the boy I met on the beach 4 years ago and who lives in the slums. He took Surya's advice (given 2 years ago) to retake his college exams and study hard. He seems to be very successful. I called to see him in the afternoon and had a very happy time with him and his parents. He has become a very successful athlete and soccer player with lots of cups around. His father got out my past letters which were wrapped in tissue paper and kept locked in a special drawer. Incidentally I am trying to type this in the late evening with a grotesque background of a very loud argument between 4 people in the next room. As this part of room is designed to be used as a large suite the connecting door is just a simple thin door. I have tried to listen to a tape but my Walkman seems to have broken (or all my tapes have problems) (now found it was stupid old French batteries). I have resorted to tuning out the radio so can drown some of the noise with white noise. Actually the thunder storm we are suffering is reaching some sort of noisy climax at the moment so noise levels are quite absurd. Having watched the film Contact on the way here I assume that I have alien messages coming to me but I am choosing to ignore them. The room in the Savera was very good although there was no remote control for TV - Surya's favourite toy. We had good continental breakfast and then strolled to the beach under a cloudy threatening sky. Had dinner in their high restaurant with the same singers as I first heard about 12 years ago. Afterwards phoned home. It was wonderful to hear you all; it made me feel as I do going up the road to the airport wondering what on earth am I doing leaving you all. I miss you all very much (even Karen; sorry - especially Karen).

After a good night's sleep we settled up at the Savera and went to airport to fly to Bangalore. Plane (airbus) was 90 minutes late so we had free lunch. Surya's first flight. Only 40 minutes and uneventful except for a few bumpy bits which he did not notice. It was nice being in an airport with S without the stress of saying goodbye. When we arrived at the Indian Institute of Science Guest house they were not expecting us; we had been relegated to the annexe which we had to ourselves - beside a cook who couldn't.

A little diversion. It is now 11.30 and, driven mad by the noise in the next room I went round (by our shared veranda) to point out that my bed was only 6 inches away from them and I could not sleep. They had all been drinking a lot and were very appreciative of my problem. So sorry boss, so sorry, the noisy one muttered repeatedly while kissing my hand. They then dropped onto knees (theirs) and stroked my feet. A second one then stood in the doorway stroking my arm and wishing me a good night. The others eventually pointed out to him that he was stopping me getting out of the

room so he staggered aside and let me out. I then had 35 minutes of peace and there was a knock at the door and the only apparently sober one was standing there swaying, asking "could your good self find your way to donating to myself a cigar". I offered him a piece of chocolate but he didn't want it. He probably couldn't think how to light it. He then staggered off into the thunderstorm.

It is now peaceful so I shall go to bed very tired. Surya was right about saving a day. I have got so much done that I can relax tomorrow. The rain is so noisy and continuous that I suspect I will be trapped here.

So good night my dears; I think of you all the time; I am so proud of you all and love you so much.

When we arrived at the Institute Prof Balaram the director of the Molecular Biophysics Unit met us as we dragged the suitcase round the paths to our room and welcomed us. He suggested I come next day to discuss plans for lecture. Manjoran called in to see me. He is a research student who I met last year and who sends e-mail messages occasionally. He took us to the Gymkhana. In English English this is a horse sport thing; In Indian English it is a Gym plus sports/games area. This was just to show us where he spends his time. We then went to the Mess (they keep this military term for canteen). In this case it was entirely appropriate. It was a huge hall with concrete floor, walls and ceiling, designed for maximum noise. Damn the mosquitoes are out; excuse me while I set up my killing device. The tables were also concrete as were the seats; both were sprinkled with rice and splashes of curry. We found a less messy bit and sat down to drink tea out of standard student canteen cups; very small with at least one chip and tea stains round rim. Tasted good. I gave 2 lectures to the Molecular Biophysics department; about 50 at each. Lots of questions so it seemed worth it. I teased the crystallographers about how they sit in the dark all day and crawl out to smoke, blinking in the light - or they are like John who works all night so we overlap for only a couple of hours a day. The same is true in Bangalore it seems. My second lecture was on John's cytochrome work which caused a lot of interest. The rest of the time I spent listening to the staff telling about their work. All good and interesting. Especially a man called Surolia who is working on carbohydrate binding proteins and so has vast knowledge of carbohydrate structure. Have arranged to get him to send some useful glucose analogues for Gyles and Raff. The first day of the chatting with staff was difficult as I was still jet lagged and managed to sleep with my eyes open while pretending to listen. I walked around the campus with Balaram (director) under the huge trees, laden down with squabbling flocks of crows. As we approached a man coming towards us Balaram predicted he would suddenly turn off the path and hurry off in a different direction; he did. A little later he said watch this man, he will decide that he is going the wrong way and sure enough when he saw us he turned round and jogged away. They had both promised to write reviews for Current Science (India's main science journal); Balaram is the editor and they were ashamed that they have not yet delivered. On the Friday night we set off for Tirupati. (see above).

Sunday: Frances came in morning and we caught up on all his complicated work plans. He earns 900 rupees a month only; (£15). He also builds hi fi tapedecks which he makes about £6 profit on (10 hours work). He is making one for me tomorrow which I shall give to Surya's family when I leave. In afternoon S came briefly and in the evening I went to his house to see family. On the way Prof Venkaiah and his son Chendu picked me up in his car (old ambassador) and they took me back (against my will) to the guest house to copy my protein programme (Rasmol) onto a floppy disk (pronounced flappy) for use on Monday. Chendu is lending his company's computer to the department as they don't have one.

They then drove me 30 minutes late to Surya's house. As the father was there it was all a bit quiet. S says nothing if he is there and Swarna refuses to sit down or talk. I was fed - as usual sitting on the bed. I was the only one eating for some reason. As I came into the house I was met by the sound of the great trombone solo in Sibelius's 7th symphony, echoing round the house. It was a recording of our orchestra made in Romsey abbey 18 months ago.

Monday: My 9.00 lecture started at 9.20 when about 70% students had eventually arrived. It is the bad weather I was told (as it was dry and not too hot or cold it seemed a rather random excuse). My first lectures are on protein structure; I have not done these here before so I am having to prepare them immediately before giving them. I enjoy the preparation more than the lectures themselves. Parthasarathy (Head of Dept) sits in the lecture preventing any informality. From the questions he asks it seems as if the lectures are more for his benefit than that of the students. The lectures are to the final year and previous year at the same time. (I would have thought that the previous year should have left, but the previous year is the year you do before the final year -crazy). After all, we did not use Rasmol programme because Chendu had not turned up to set up the computer. Actually all that was needed was to plug it in and turn it on but I prefer to avoid appearing too brilliant an all rounder. This evening I walked down to the town (2 km) in the dry with glorious orange cumulus clouds towering threateningly over the temple in the distance. The aim was to buy umbrella and broom and chocolate (I obviously have some exotic rituals planned). Met Swarna who said Surya had gone to the guest house to make some arrangements so I aborted the mission and caught an auto back to dinner. Caught S as he was about to set off home. He stayed to eat. The very old, very fat cook is always bad tempered in the evening if I am later than 7 for dinner. She literally throws the tin plates onto the table and slops rice onto them. We had Brindi bahji (ladies fingers) which was 50% green chillies. As my teeth fell out one by one I caught sight of the cook peering round the door to the kitchen with a triumphant leer on her face. I smiled and put my thumb up to her. This was appropriate as I was then told it has some obscene significance. No problem; nothing that a pint of water and a bowl of natural yoghurt couldn't cure. I am enjoying the food - even the curry for breakfast. The weather is improving with only a little rain today.

Wandering around the temple tonight I was glad to find that I love this place as before. I was there while the god's wife (Mrs Govindaswamy) was paraded around the temple precinct. She was carried on a platform on two rough tree trunks carried on the shoulders of 12 devoted men. They were preceded by the elephants and followed by the band - mainly huge bad tempered oboes plus very violent drummers who seems to have drummed themselves into a trance which prevented them stopping. The oboe players were looking frustrated as the drummers stole the show. It all seems so medieval, with saffron robed dirty grey bearded dirty holy men holding out huge sea shells for alms and the devotees splashing about in the filthy water tank to purify themselves (its the thought that counts).

Time for bed. The time for remembering you all especially.

Tuesday/Wednesday. I am writing this 7.30 Wednesday evening trying to cool down by sitting wet beneath the fan. I am struggling to remember what I did yesterday. I woke due to the 6.00 train which makes the whole building shake. Prepared another protein structure lecture and created some easy to use structures for the Rasmol protein programme. I was panicking that I would not finish in time and S arrived with the Times of India and an invitation to visit his friends in the Hotel Bliss for dinner. My lectures seem to be going OK. Fortunately the same students attend each day so there is some continuity. My explanation of hydrophobic interactions was a success: it is like interactions between students in India; the boys do not especially want to spend all their

time together, but polar interactions with the girls are forbidden, so the boys tend to clump together in a hydrophobic interaction. I still have to suffer the blackboard that was "only a temporary arrangement sir" 4 years ago. It is grey and old and cracked with white streaks (no it is not appropriate). Worse is that it is balanced on an old desk so slopes away from the user; to use the top of it the lecturer must lie on the lower half.

I have not started my own work here yet - partly because prof Venkaiah likes to sit and chat after my lectures.

S arrived in an auto to take me to dinner. The hotel is the other side of the town beyond the huge bus station. It is a modern 3 star hotel. The connection with S is that his institute (Trade Wings Institute of management) sends students to do some of their training there. We first met the boy at reception; I had spent some time with him at the institute the first day I went there. He then introduced me to the floor manager; then we were taken to the restaurant where we were the only guests with about 5 staff. All seemed to be friends or acquaintances of Surya. The chief of them eventually joined us and ate more than we did of our dinner. We were also joined by the assistant manager. He then tried to pay but we fought him off. Earlier in the day Raja (a friend of Surya's from previous year) had left a message to say that he would come to see me at 7.20. As there are no phones it is never possible to modify arrangements so I left a message outside to say that I would be back at 8.30. After eating we called in at Raja's to find that he was at some private tuition so he could not have come at the time he said anyway. We then walked back into town and met him coming on his brother's scooter. We then did the obvious and all piled onto it to go back into town. Fortunately it is never possible to go fast because of the rickshaws, goats, pigs and oxcarts - all mixed in a vortex of assorted humans. We dropped S in town and Raja and I had a nice cool ride back to guest house. He was very worried that I might have spoken to his father, because he had told his family that he had been away in Madras meeting me. He didn't tell me where he had been in fact.

Today (Wednesday) I actually got around to showing the students (1st year only) the protein structures on Rasmol which they enjoyed. They were very lively when Venkaiah wisely left the office; he knows they find him inhibiting. Immediately after lunch Srivasanu and Gopal (prof of Virology) turned up to try to persuade me to give their students some lectures. They could have rearranged their own timetable to enable them to come to the ones I give to biochemists but they would prefer my inconvenience to theirs. So I refused (nicely). Gave my last lecture on protein structure and hurried back to start my work on my grant report only to be met by Nagaraju (friend from last year who is doing biotechnology and working for exams at the moment). He had come with his friend who is one of the few students I positively disliked. He always seems to want something. He usually hogs the conversation with the standard question of how I can help him to come to UK and study free.

I had another confusing social problem today. Francis went yesterday to Madras to buy parts to build my hi fi set; he had said that I should go to dinner with his family tonight but that he would phone this morning to confirm it. There was no phone call but he left a message later to say that he would come at 7.30 (to take me to dinner???). Surya had arranged to call at his house, so this evening I had to go to town to tell Surya to cancel this plan. This gave me an excuse to get rid of Nagaraju and friend. Fortunately S was at home. I forgot to say I did not need food so his mum produced some sort of wheat flour semolina with nuts and onions. We sat in the room opposite the kitchen while Swarna sat on the stone floor in the corridor between with her evening class of 4-7 year olds. They sit their with slates and chalk or scruffy notebooks working at writing or little sums. They soon lose interest and squirm about the floor like a lot of coloured fisherman's maggots (Hugh please note use of simile). She takes them one by one for

English reading practice. This involves her chanting English nursery rhymes while the chosen child repeats it after her. This is done 2 words at a time: Jack and Jill Jack and Jill; Went up went up; The hill the hill; to fetch to fetch; a pail a pail; of water of water. This is a very good way of perpetuating a very strong Telugu accent that often does not sound anything like the English original. I have been writing this for 1 hour as Francis is 1 hour late. I guess I have now missed dinner so the semolina might prove to be a life saver.

I have done very little walking in the country as it is often sad and cloudy in the morning or I have too much preparation. Today was sunny some of the time so I walked back through the nicer part of the campus and saw some beautiful bee eaters, a huge kingfisher, a golden oriole and a white bellied drongo. There seem to be fewer birds this year (*not less*); this is probably because the 'good' rains in the last 2 years have provided far thicker vegetation, so they remain hidden.

I shall stop writing this now, do some washing (I have hot water this year!) and have an early night.

Good night my lovely family; I miss you all very much; I hope you do not find life so much better when I am away.

Thurs 27th. This is a routine diary entry. That is, I am writing it having nothing better to do although nothing has happened today. Francis did not come today so I do not know what can have happened (Indian expression). Another cloudy morning. I actually started my own work today - writing my research report. Now doing lectures on bioenergetics. I wanted to get back to my work (started at 6.30 this morning) but had to have tea with Venkaiah (a routine I cannot avoid). He had intended to come to my lecture but was not there, having a more imaginative excuse than most students. "You see sir, it was necessary to have a clean shirt and some pressing was needed, and we have monkey problems because of the trees. We have this gadgety Easypress thing for clothes (an iron) and a monkey stole the extension cable. He sat up in the tree with his friends and dismantled it into little pieces and then left them up in the tree. My ladder steps were too short and so ..." etc. Managed another 2 hours writing before lunch to the sound of pouring rain. I may not have mentioned, but after all that fuss about getting umbrellas I forgot mine. Surya keeps promising to get me one; he claims I would get a bad one. I explained that, like friends, a bad one like him is better than none at all. This seemed to work as the he turned up at 6 with my whole shopping list: string for hanging washing, chocolate, an Indian broomstick and an umbrella. Fortunately the rain decreased to a drizzle for me to get to lecture in afternoon. I tried to hurry back for writing but was collected on the way by 2 old research student friends on a scooter who brought me back to guest house (Rajiv and Suban). Had to be courteous and order tea and chat and show pictures etc. Surya arrived with shopping and they left; 30 minutes later Raja turned up with the son of the assistant commissioner of police to offer me his father's help if I need it for anything (not at the moment thanks; maybe later). After they left went with S by auto to a new restaurant that is 'multicuisine'. This has usual veg Indian dishes with rice, the international alternative being exactly the same but with noodles. Except for the special Schwezuan rice; I had this for remembrance of my Schwezuan trip and found that it was even too hot for Surya.

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I fell asleep and woke to find 3 pages of this stuff under my sweaty paws. So, a routine half successful day. I shall finish the day now by reading and listening to Mozart's magic flute.

little map that 7 hours was more likely. I offered to pay the extra £10 for the whole lot of us to go in a more comfortable bus. In fact it was excellent; it could not have been better. When the plan was made we were to leave early in the morning (about 5.0 O'clock). But S explained "slight change of plan Saru (sir); we are leaving at half past midnight. So I smiled weakly and sent him home and went to bed for 3 hours. Of course this had to be the one occasion when their timing was perfect and I was woken sandy eyed to set off. They were all excited, especially Sunil. In my kind, tolerant, caring way I took an instant dislike to Sunil which matured during the night and next day and next night into pure hatred (odd expression; I suppose pure does not mean good and honourable but merely undiluted by anything else at all). He is about 30 yrs old and looks like the typical Indian film star; fat faced with thick moustache and sarcastic smile. Always likes students to call him Sir and fuss over him (that's my function - to be made a fuss of); all the time he pontificates (acts like the Pope, speaking with 'absolute authority') on any subject from a base of pure ignorance. The only problem with my otherwise very comfortable seat was the loudspeaker (correction; much too stupidly tooloudspeaker) about 50 cm over my head (metric measurements for Hugh). Immediately we started, out came the cassettes of Indian film music. The best that can be said of this is that the recording quality is now quite good. Of course this means that the music can be judged more dispassionately. I only have passionate views on this music; I reject it with nearly as much hatred as I eventually felt for Sunil. Southern Indian classical music depends mainly on very complex rhythms and tunes; there is very little harmony. Film music has kept the tunes (but more vulgar), lost the rhythm and added bad Western orchestral sounds. These are mainly screeching violins playing in unison like demented swifts hurtling about above the rest of the music. The female singers sing about one octave above the human range and produce the sound mainly through their noses (allegedly). Surya sometimes managed to get them to turn down the volume a little but they sneaked in and put it up again quite quickly. I soon got a very bad headache and felt slightly nauseous. Most of the students eventually went to sleep so there was only the driver and myself to enjoy the music. I seem to be stupidly unable to sleep on buses. Waking at 4 o'clock in the morning often brings on the blues - illogically feeling bad about everything in life. In this case I felt I was quite logical in hating the world. The last part of the journey was through hilly interesting forested region where tigers live. Sunil yelled over the top of a screeching song at me "wonderful peaceful place sir". "Yes I am sure it could be", but he did not notice. Of course, I bravely smiled; this would usually be called a weak smile, but mine probably looked as if it was dying of leprosy. We arrived in a drizzly rain by the falls at 7.15. Sunil said the traffic jams had delayed us 4 hours! (There were no traffic jams).

The place itself was wonderful and worth visiting. All the water from the surrounding hills of 2 states Karnataka and Tamil Nadu comes together from different directions and fuses as the Kauvery river down huge waterfalls and rapids. Because it is so far from anywhere else there is just a village which is very attractive. We were out of season so it was not too full of tourists. The tourists are all Indian and so this does not have the usual meaning of elderly American women with blue hair fussing over exchange rates. I had hoped we might stop and have some breakfast. No sir; this is a picnic - Surya has prepared our breakfast and we will have it during the boat trip. Help! Just looking at the water made me want to pee at the thought that Clive and Mark would want to go kayaking in it. The rapids after the falls would have been very good; the river was very wide and so there were many different routes. The rain had stopped and we set off for the boats. These are circular coracles. The shape is the same as Hugh's breakfast bowl. They take one paddler who sits on a log leaning forward to paddle with a single bladed wooden paddle. The 4 passengers climb in and sit on the floor in the water. As soon as I was in and felt the warm water (in and out of the boat) I felt very cheerful. We moved

off in a 3 boat convoy over a gently moving flat stretch of water between trees and rocks, disturbing a treeful of large black fruit bats; they fly like a cross between a butterfly and a small heron, randomly flopping along together like burnt newspapers in the wind. We had a very exhilarating, ride, spinning between the rocks with the students all cleaning their teeth. They only had one tube of toothpaste so this was flung between the boats. I declined the loan of a toothbrush. We disembarked onto the base of a very high rocky cliff and clambered to the top to get a good view of the main falls. By then it was pouring with rain but this hardly mattered as by then we had sat in a bowl of breakfast water and waded through the small rivers and pools on the way up. Surya slipped very painfully into one up to his waist, mainly because his balance was affected by carrying two plastic bags with our breakfast (he was youngest so had to carry them). The boat boys were very good at helping everyone over the rocks and through the rivers. It was like running over rocks on the shore. I had the slight disadvantage that I wanted to do it my way and move quickly so that I could jump off less secure places (usual method) but I was hindered by two of the boat boys who felt I was their special responsibility; "please sir go slowly this is very dangerous". In fact they were very helpful crossing some of the more rapid small rivers as we formed a crazy chain of hopping, shouting, slithering, handholding conga dancers. I did not enjoy the tradition at the top - to balance on a rock over the 100 metre high falls for my photo. Fortunately the boat boys had to get in the picture with me so they could catch me as I toppled over. Breakfast was in little tinfoil containers - guess - very spicy rice, eaten with fingers. Of course the containers were flung all over the place afterwards. Traditionally, although everyone seemed to like their breakfast no-one said thank you for it. The rain stopped and we eventually got safely down the more gentle rapids. We had a lovely lazy spin cross the lake watching the fishermen and the kingfishers and herons. The boats merged in the middle at one point for Sunil to drink a mixture of whisky and Thums Up. When offered some I declined and said it was a little boys habit. Fortunately very few of the others had any. They are so unaccustomed to alcohol that they become instantly and noisily drunk.

We later stopped for barbecued fish on an island in the lake. When we returned there was a very lengthy discussion of what to do next. Sunil wanted to go to some hill station and drink and stay the night. Surya said we must be back by midnight as I had lectures the next morning (he also had work to do). I left them all to argue and went down to see the 'baths'. Some of the falls are used for bathing and washing etc. On the way boys kept jumping our and waving bottles at me. These were offering "massages in special oil sir - you will feel wonderful both during and afterwards". Easily resisted as it was in public and the masseurs were gross old men who slapped and banged and pulled in what sounded a very uncomfortable process. The dispute over, it was decided we would go up into the hills as it would only take 1 hour extra. We stopped in the sun by the road to have lunch. Also prepared by Surya - of rice and curry on banana leaves. It looked very unappetising but everyone else really enjoyed it. It is the mushy rice up between my fingers I do not enjoy. Most of mine ended up in a ditch. We set off at about 3.30 and arrived during sunset in the hills which were certainly very beautiful and the music was off for a time. We climbed in the dusk up about 1500 metres to arrive in total darkness at 6 O'Clock to eat what I thought were Budgie bajhis (like Brindi bajies but made from budgerigars). They were bananas. Very good. We then drove home with music and very stiff knees etc arriving back at guest house at 4.30 in the morning (9 hour drive). Let's be positive about this. The bus was excellent and the driver the best I gave ever sat behind in India. The river trip was almost worth the trouble. And 24 hours later the sun is shining and the world all looks good again. I am writing this at 7 in the morning on Tuesday. Must stop now; See you later.

I forgot to mention that Monday evening I was collected by Kiran on an old small motorbike and we gently potted up to Giri Puram. I like the way that for directions to

his house even from a mile away you ask for the tamarind tree. Had exactly the same dinner as last year; sweetish eggy bread, noodles and spicy roast chicken. Kiran and I sat at a small table and ate while father, mother, servant girl, brother Thomas and his new wife and the other brother (Charlie) stood or sat watching. Took the usual photos and showed family pictures then driven back to guest house on bike again. After 20 minutes K left so I walked down the road to C block hostel to wish Nagaraju well in his first exam the next morning. I have seen very little of him or his group as they have important exams. They seemed very pleased that I had come. They said that Raju would not sleep that night because he was scared all his memories would leave him while he slept.

Now writing this 10 in the evening on Tuesday while listening to a Celine Dion tape. Weather was beautiful today; hot and sunny with some clouds and a cool breeze. Still felt very sleepy in my lectures. Saw Raju's group sitting in the open lecture theatre doing their exam. I stood in the open door hoping to catch his eye but he was too engrossed. So I wrote a good luck message on a scrap of paper and the lecturer put it on his desk. He turned on his beaming smile, kissed the paper and put it into his shirt pocket. This method seemed to work; he came to my lecture in the afternoon (for special reasons of sentiment sir) to tell me that this 'special act of friendship sir was rewarded by the gods and all the questions were easy'. This service is now available on request. Went to the waterfall temple at 4 this afternoon then sat in park with S watching the sunset then to dinner at a hotel which is half completed. This is apparently some tax evasion scheme. The owner claims he has no money so cannot complete it. Wednesday 3rd Dec. I am writing this after a specially good day. I woke at 6 and, panicking slightly at the fact that my research report is going rather slowly, I ate some soft dry biscuits, washed down with mango juice, and did 2 hours work before breakfast. A beautiful day; hot with a breeze and very clear light. After a lecture on protein synthesis got back here by 11. Washed all my clothes and hung on a line right across the room and, feeling I deserved a rest, sat in the sun. I then worked, still in the sun, until lunchtime. Kiran was suppose to have come to lunch as his work was to take him here but he did not come. No problem. After a gentle little lecture I was told by a student that there may be a holiday tomorrow. I checked with prof Venkaiah who said that was rubbish; no maybe, there is certainly a holiday but most days are holidays. This one is to celebrate the birthday of the auntie of lord Venkateswara. As some of the students would want to go to the temple in the hills at Tirumula I cancelled the lectures. Venkaiah says that they all claim to be religious to get the holiday then they all go to the pictures. Sure enough they later said that to say thank you for declaring a holiday would I go to the pictures with them. I said yes but something else cropped up instead. I came back and went for a walk until 6 around the villages. I was recognised by one of the girls and taken to her house where I was reminded that I had not sent their pictures. Had to promise to come again and take some more. Then home to dinner with S after listening to some Magic flute. At 8.30 of the Previous year (1st year) students came. I did my usual thing of sitting on the bed like a Raja and they sat in a ring around it enthralled by my casual chat. You look so beautiful sir tonight; please wear those nice blue trousers again to the lectures (nice to be appreciated!). One of them is a classical singer and so sang a classical song; it was 10 minutes of very complicated singing with many quarter tones and complicated rhythms. They then demanded "some fast music sir". I had no Michael Jackson so put on a tape of Indian film music left by Kiran (not too bad). A second student (Suresh Kumar who is the poet of the year) then performed a crazy dance while the others sat clapping excitedly. The dance was a mixture of Jackson moonwalking and classical Indian dance. He then presented me with a photo of a huge painting he had done; it looked very impressive. Altogether a good day.

Thursday 4th Dec. I was woken as usual at 6 by the traffic and for some reason

first thought of Hugh's exams. They are probably over by now. I think of you all so much (more than when I am at home). I forgot to mention that last night I showed the students my usual batch of photos. Hugh looks a wonderful boy sir can you send him to us. Tell him he has some very good friends here. When they saw the nice picture of Clive with Karen they collapsed in giggles and laughter. We do not have this sort of thing in this country sir. I decided to devote the day to finishing the BBSRC research report (I succeeded). Surya had no work so turned up at breakfast time. He tried to distract me but seeing that he was failing he decided to tidy and clean my room all to tape of Celine Dion. A little later a friend of his (Prasad) arrived to give me a formal invitation to his cousin's wedding reception (Wedding was in USA; this was the later local reception). I then had to walk to the student hostel to tell them I could not go to the pictures with them as I had to attend a wedding. They were so excited that I had come to visit. One of the boys (Nersaiah) is incredibly dark with a huge mouth of shining white teeth. "He is country boy sir, so he is very shy. He looked as if he was blushing at this but it didn't make much impression. Some of these boys seem to be starved of affection (profound philosopher I've become); one smile in his direction and he pushed his friend out of the way to come and sit by me hanging round my neck like a young Hugh. Came back to guest house and spent the next 5 hours finishing the report. Surya arrived with 2 new pairs of trousers for me and a shirt - all made by the tailor in Nethaji road from measurements taken from my other ones. They are very good so I wore them to the wedding reception at Hotel Guestline Bliss. The first 2 hours was taken up with a programme of classical devotional songs superamplified (the curse of devotional bands everywhere), and later two girls dancing. We then fought for a buffet supper which was so spicy hot I felt my lips were getting frayed at the edges. I suddenly found myself shaking hands with a shocked Venkaiah; the bride's mother lives near him but of course he was not expecting to see me. He and S had a long funny conversation; that is they laughed a lot. As they kept looking at me I suspect that I was the joke. He is very pleased with his old car and gets a bit carried away with its potential. He offered us a lift back only to realise 15 minutes later that he had done the same to many others. We later saw it crawling out of the car park with 8 people in it. So we got auto rickshaw back, dropping S at home in Nethaji road. Because of the god's aunty's birthday, there are pictures in fairy lights scattered all over the town making it all like a funfair. I turned on the radio on my walkman this morning and got an Indian station playing Rudolph the red nosed reindeer so it seems Christmas is coming. Bed time. I realise this will only be read if at all some time after I am back but I still write it as if it is a letter I am about to post tomorrow. I have only been away a little over 2 weeks so I should not be expecting any mail but it would be nice to get some. It feels very different now that I know I could get in touch if necessary; I feel less isolated. I miss you all and am looking forward to being back.

Hello diary and readers. It is Monday morning 8th dec. Although a lot has happened in the last few days I seem to have run out of steam. Speaking of which, the 6.30 train from Tirupati to Hyderabad has just driven through my room. Because of the level crossing just up the road it starts its siren just after leaving the station and keeps it going until past the crossing. The whole room fills with this enormous sound. Last week I was by the crossing as the evening local went by with its full load plus people sitting or standing on the roof. One of these was a technician from the department who got very excited when he saw me and started to trot along the roof towards the back in order to stay in one place and shout greetings. Looking at me, he paid no attention to the local situation and was just prevented from running right off the end of the train by a young man in a dohti who saw what was about to happen leapt to his feet and did his duty; the last I saw as it went around the corner was these two catching there balance in a sort of 1920s dance routine.

I have lost a day or two in this account. One event of note was my visit to the I.S. Mahal picture place to see Mask. A crummy film with Jim Carrey. I arrived on time with S at 9.15 but no sign of the students. They arrived one minute before the film started - because food had been late. The cinema is huge like an aircraft hangar both because of its size and acoustics (with bad echoes) together with rows of cooling fans like aircraft propellers roaring throughout the performance. About 45 minutes was randomly cut from the film so the projectionist could go home early. Nersaiah sat beside me muttering 'waste sir, waste'; of our time I think. True. I was wearing my new Indian made clothes - long sleeve shirt and black shiny trousers. As we went up the steps the boys were all feeling the cloth and saying you have a beautiful dress sir.

Sunday 7th Dec. Decided to have the luxury of starting the day by reading my novel on my veranda looking out at the clouds and pouring rain over the guest house grounds - a small but desolate plain of red earth and small rivers. This novel (appropriately, called Red earth and pouring rain) is a real story book. It starts with a monkey, who for typical Indian reasons is able to type, typing stories which are then read aloud to people congregating outside the house. The first story is about a storyteller who tells a story about an old man who happens to be a story teller. All these stories are set in different times and places so I am often unsure which story I am in. I was disturbed after a few minutes by an unusually deep sounding bell coming up the road. Usually the bell is the small temple elephant but this was daddy elephant plus the smallest baby. He has huge tusks and seems quite difficult to control. By the time I had my camera ready all I got was its rear view. Had breakfast this morning with Phoebe from Arizona. An elderly lady who is here on a Fullbright scholarship to study care of the elderly in India. She has the usual American unselfconscious mispronunciation of place names. She pronounces Tirupati as Tirooopadi. Unfortunately she has got them making 'bread omelette' again which is even more positively boring than idlis (rice cakes with curry).

After breakfast I started doing some work on the cytochrome grant application and got very excited by some new stuff that I thought of, so spent 2 hours sitting on veranda with computer. To avoid reflection from white shirt onto the screen I use my black Malaysian 'shirt'.

Surya has become a very competent social secretary. He arrived about 10.30 (pronounce ten terty) with my schedule for the day; Kiran, who had failed to turn up as planned earlier in the week was to come at lunchtime and I was to be collected by Raja at 6.30 for dinner at his house. The rain suddenly stopped so we walked to the dairy farm to see the elephants. Surya had arranged for me to go for a ride on one but his keeper/driver (father of Mahdu) had cut his hand badly as he leapt out of the way of the smaller elephant who got a bit aggressive. So no elephant ride. Last night in Tirupati I walked round the corner of Nethaji road to find myself in even greater chaos than normal as two of the temple elephants were coming home. They had decided to go for a jog and were quite alarming as they crashed out of the muddle of deep muddy puddles, glaring lights and dirty darkness.

As usual Kiran arrived promptly and then tried to 'do his duty' of repairing one of my tapes that has gone funny (Celine Dionne). He spent 20 minutes dismantling, reassembling etc. No good. After lunch we chatted for an hour or so then Kiran demanded the computer and played Prince of Persia for about 2 hours. As soon as he had left Raja appeared to take me to his house for dinner at Bairaji Patteda. It was similar to previous visits - sit with his father watching Star Television 12 channels with a little table on which I am served food. He doesn't eat and Raja, Surya and assorted friends drift in and out to sit on the bed and eat small items from my main meal. I am given too much - including rather greasy spicy gristly bits of mutton; I make the mistake of saying it was delightful, a word the boys decided is their new English word, resulting in a second helping. The television programme was a BBC World programme discussion

led by Charles Wheeler (great journalist) with a panel of 10 internationals discussing serious and interesting issues. It was clearly put on for my benefit so I made another mistake and said to Raja that his dad (senior policeman, very strict with Raja and very little English) need not have this stuff on if he does not usually watch it. So he grabbed the controller and put on India's top of the pops hosted by a group of giggling girls playing to camera and pretending to be excited. The programme was made up of these 4 in a studio (no audience) plus videos of grotesquely strutting rather fat paunchy men in moustaches. Fortunately, having dinner in someone's house is just that, and I was liberated immediately afterwards. On the ride back I then discovered a new way of taking interesting pictures of Tirupati. With dear Hughie's flash camera I sat on the back of the scooter flashing at people.

Monday: Another grey damp day. Started with a suitably boring bread omelette made tolerable by Phoebe's company. Only 3 students came to my 9 O'clock lecture instead of the maximum of about 12 expected (these are specialist molecular biology lectures). The best of all the students is Lakshmi; she corrects my structures and is very encouraging. When I asked if I should cancel the lecture she said that my lectures are so exciting and stimulating that they would attend them 'through thick and thin sir' because you have become our inspiration. So, how could I refuse. One girl said that there had been a bad accident between a scooter and car at a cross roads of the small roads on the campus and the boys were helping get the man to hospital. I found later that this was a cover up. By an amazing coincidence the man who helped the injured scooterist to hospital was Surya on his way to the University bank. He said that the man was unconscious and everyone was just looking at him on the ground (they have no ambulance service). So Surya had to heave him into the car that caused the accident with no person helping, to drive him to hospital. The car driver was some important person who explained to Surya that he must say that the car driver was very kind and came along after the accident and helped in spite of a heavy schedule etc.

[Break while Manohar comes for his morning hug; very pleased when he saw his name as I typed this]. He is the small security man I have now known for 3 years. He tells me there is a Kabbadi match today so it will not rain. Oddly enough the word for rain is washum - quite suitable. He is very excited because there are ladies matches - very big ladies. Only Ladies/ladies and gents/gents matches].

The boys did not come to the lecture because of 'messlate situation' - means breakfast was late. I hurried back to get on with my cytochrome work only to be soon disrupted by arrival of Ravi Chandra Reddy plus friend. He is the economics student who wants to be friends but who doesn't speak much English. His friend did not either so I had to try to find things to entertain them but my heart wasn't in it and they left after a mere 40 minutes! The friend, Subramanian, made my day by asking for 'my sweet name'. They said they would be late for lunch so they must 'go by walking, fastly and straightly'. This is a common error; it is sensibly assumed that all adverbs end in 'ly' so they add it to all adverbs.

In the afternoon had full lecture - on my own research (supposed to be 1st of 3). Afterwards I went to lab to invite the 1st years to come to dinner at the Bhimas Hotel as a goodbye event but they said 'Why sir, this is not special we eat daily sir'. Whether they were wanting something more special but were not saying I didn't wait to find out, and went with the 3 research students only. Was given a lift to town on Chendu's motorbike. He is son of prof Venkaiah who has started a computer business. He said he couldn't come with us because he is, for 4 weeks, a devotee of Ayappa, so paints his face with garish orange stripes on a background of grey ash, washes twice daily (is this more or less than usual?) but eats only once. He also may not wear shoes which makes motorbikes a bit more difficult. He has just done a deal with TDD (the temple organisers) for 200 workstations so is feeling successful. Surya quietly announced at

dinner that he has also had a big success today. 'I have saved one man's life itself and I have a place for higher management training with Hotel Guestline only'. The 'itself' and 'only' are used as punctuation. This hotel is the best 4 star hotel here and this will be very good for him.

Tuesday 9th. 10 in evening.

I am writing this to the sound of a tidy organised clean sweet smelling Bach Cantata as an antidote to the temple music. I leave on Thursday morning and so have entered the sad farewell phase. This morning started fine and sunny so had a nice walk in to give the second lecture on my work. NagaRaju was waiting for me outside the lecture theatre and said he would meet me in 10 minutes and walk back to the guest house with me. He is in the middle of important exams so he has very little time to be sociable. So after calling into the department I went to wait for him. 30 minutes later (typically) he had not appeared so I caught an auto back. I feel really decadent going home by taxi to save ten minutes walking but I'm feeling self indulgent. The sun came out as soon as I got back so I sat outside to sort out some work in shorts feeling happily holidayish. NagaRaju then spoilt it by arriving and insisting on going inside. He had a bad stomach pain which was clearly to my highly trained eye a case of appendicitis (very sensitive in one area etc).

He agreed to go to a doctor if it got worse. He then asked if he could pour some worries over me. "You are my dear professor and sweet friend sir so tell me some good advice. Do I get PhD place and have no money and also probably no job then, or should I stop this learning stuff and go to my native place and get married. I have my farm and could get married in August. But problem now sir. Cyclone has flooded all my fields and we will get no money this year". Well, you see I am clearly just the person to solve this problem. He has decided he likes the picture of Swarna, Surya's sister, so when Surya arrived he arranged to join us for goodbye evening at Surya's home. Surya has been a wonderful social secretary. He had arrived to say he had confirmed my flight and changed my money and booked a car and taken cloth (given me by NagaRaju) to have 'trouser made sir' and bought more cloth for shirts. This afternoon I went in to give a lecture to find only 3 students there. As soon as I arrived they started on building work in the room 2 floors below. This involved digging a narrow trench in the stone floor by brute hammering by 3 men in a complicated 3/4 time. I had insufficient willpower to compete so we sat with the fans on to cool the supersaturated air at the big open window with its beautiful view of the hills with aggressive rain clouds moving in again. Soon had the promised rain but not bad. Got back before it started and got 3 hours work done before Rajiv arrived to talk - that is he wanted me to tell him for the tenth time that there are no opportunities for postgraduate work for him in UK. Almost as soon as they he left, Srinivasalu, head of virology arrived to take me to the Myaura hotel for dinner with Venkaiah and head of microbiology at the Vet college. We had a thrilling trip on his scooter all the way through town and a nice dinner. Rao then scootered me to Girpuram to see Kiran and family to say goodbye and to invite Kiran to Surya's home tomorrow evening. This was through very narrow streets just wide enough for a scooter or 2 bikes but not all three. One buffalo, one cow and one scooter proved impossible and I had to get off to negotiate with the holy beast. I persuaded her with the hook on the end of my umbrella (around a horn). We then turned a corner to find ourselves in a great crowd all chanting and worshipping [how do you spell this? Can you have a worshipping forecast?] a goddess on an oxcart. She was accompanied by her band of singers and deafening drummers. There was a lot of slamming coconuts on the floor after offering them to her. Great skill and experience is needed to get through a narrow lane full of such devotees and gods, and children throwing fireworks. I must admit I would not have thought of the approach. You press the horn and drive straight at the crowd and they part like the red sea. Eventually I recognised the tamarind tree that marks

Kiran's place. I had to work hard to explain to the microbiology professor (my driver) that I was quite capable of finding the house and could negotiate an auto later. Kiran's family were just finishing eating (sitting on the floor eating off banana leaves). Charlie was there so I could congratulate him on the birth of his son (Sunday morning). New grandfather was very excited about the fact that his grandson was much paler than either of the parents and had claimed that he was nearly as pale as me. I wonder what Kiran, who is quite dark, thinks about his father's obvious preference for pale children. Said goodbye to the family; they are all so affectionate and we stood together feeling sad and promising to come soon. Kiran borrowed Charlie's little scooter to drive me home where he asked if he could have the Magic Flute cassette and I could not say no. It will be more special to him than to me. Had to say goodbye to Kiran in case he does not make it tomorrow night. Now feeling very sad. It is now that I am so grateful for my beautiful family; I am so looking forward to seeing you soon.

Wednesday 10th. 5.30pm.

I am writing this while waiting for Nagaraju to come and say goodbye. He is then planning to come to Surya's to meet Swarna. Of course he is already 30 minutes late. This morning was beautiful sunny weather so went for a short walk up the road, feeling sorry that I had had so little opportunity to go for walks this year. Got back to find Surya waiting with my Celine Dion tape mended. He re-wound it all by hand onto an emptied tape. He collected the tape player by Auto later in the morning and seems to have taken it with him.

I gave my last lecture this morning - on my research. Venkaiah decided to come to this and when he saw the state of the lecture theatre he became so annoyed he sent a student off to get a cleaner. So we all stood outside while all the old bits of chalk, screwed up paper, bits of leaves and broken plaster were swept out of the room. This left the place with a clean floor but with a very dusty atmosphere so we had a very sneezy lecture. I probably haven't mentioned that they still have the same old blackboard which is cracked and has white patches on it. It is not fixed to the wall but balanced sloping on a table so to reach the top means leaning over all the chalk dust on the table. Not very pleasant. When it rains heavily the floor is usually a big puddle which I splash about in. There is no glass in the windows which are huge with superb views of the hills.

This afternoon was my Farewell function. Lecture theatre nicely decorated. Had the usual quiet speeches from half a dozen students thanking me for such jolly lectures and for becoming such a beloved friend. Parthasarathy (head of Department) made a useless speech summarising my lectures wrongly and not knowing how to stop. I did my music hall turn of funny stories about my experiences and teasing some of the students. I was then presented with a huge bouquet of flowers. I then explained that the other lecturers were very busy and must leave but that I could stay. Other years the students have been disappointed that I was made to leave by the other professors who said that the students do not like staff at their parties. I am not surprised as they are very inhibited by the staff. They were a bit surprised by my suggestion that they leave but Venkaiah said it was a good idea and off they went. About 6 students then took turns to sing songs including Lakshmi who was interrupted rudely by some of the boys, because she sang too quietly sir. I suggested Nersaiah should sing. 'Sir, he will not, he is so shy'. He amazed everyone by coming forward with a song carefully written out in his exercise book. He stood looking very embarrassed looking down at his book and sang a very gentle little song. Lakshmi leaned over and said 'he is very sad, sir, he has sung a song about his evergreen love for his friend who is leaving; goodbye sweet friend do not forget me; it is very special, he has never been heard before. So I gulped and applauded (he got the loudest applause of all) and he came and sat next to me with his head on my shoulder. They then sang a popular film song of previous year called Moustafa. Moustafa, Moustafa, don't worry Moustafa, day by day, day by day sail along in

friendship Moustafa. Then presented with wooden picture and I returned my flowers to Lakshmi for all the ladies to put in their hostel. Very difficult to stop tears through all this. They all came outside to wave goodbye as I walked off into the sunset. Had to shake hands with all the boys, with lots of hugs, and then of course a polite Namaste to the girls. I have had no special friends amongst this group (except Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth) but have got to know a lot of them quite well.

Had a good goodbye dinner at Surya's. Nagaraju actually arrived at the guest house only 30 minutes late.

He was on a bike which had to be returned. He assumed I would travel on cross bar. Come sir, no problem I am a good driver. He wiggled his pointed eyebrows at me in encouragement but I resisted. Fortunately the problem was solved by an auto. I instructed the driver (who seemed about 15 years old) to follow the bike which was quite a problem as it was more manoeverable than we were. Kiran arrived one hour late after 11 hours at work, cycling round Tirupati. Surya had collected the tape player with its huge speakers earlier in the day by auto and had installed them on one of the concrete ledges about 7 ft up and it produced really good sound. The ladies were in the room with the big bed and we were in the little room with a sort of wooden bench/sofa. Only room for 3 so Surya stood about. Then sets of photos with all combinations of the 4 friends.

Friday. From now on this is being written at home just to finish the story. Sorry if it is a bit dull. You can stop if you like. I was up at 6 to pack which I did in a uniquely careful way as I had so much to pack. No problem, got it all in. Soon after breakfast Chandra Reddy arrived to say goodbye. As soon as he had gone Nagaraju arrived to swear that he would be my friend for all his life, then the car arrived. We wanted to leave at 10 so Surya had booked it for 9. It arrived at 9.20 so I sent the driver off to have his 'tiffin'. Prof Venkaiah then arrived with a Christmas card (a snowy English village) and a formal invitation to come back next year. Exactly at 10 Surya arrived. As always he had planned to do what was best - he did not want to be in the way of other friends come to say goodbye. Of course the very fact that he was so sensitive meant that he would not have been in the way. We then set out for Mahabalipuram. We have visited there from Madras previously; it is a tourist place because of the shore temples - built in 7th century, and the fantastic rock carvings etc. The rather cloudy day made the journey comfortably cool with all the windows open and blowing through the car. We drove continuously for 5 hours stopping only once by a glorious emerald paddy field for a communal pee. Arrived stiff and dusty in a very cloudy Mala and found the Ashok Temple bay resort just north of the small town. Our room was facing the shore. We'd had no lunch so wandered dosily into the village and wandered from one little snack place to another; had delicious samosas and onion bahjis and plantain bahjis and little tin cups of spicy frothy sweet milky tea. We explored all the little roads with their world-famous workshops which specialised in stone carving. We then toured all the little restaurants listed in the Lonely planet guide and eventually tested 2 during the afternoon and evening. One was a french bistro where we have banana crepes and much later we were in a seafood place which was wasted on Surya as he only eats veg. I made the mistake of having crab with rice. The crab came complete and I had to break my way in. It was covered in gunky very spicy curry. My lips felt if they were frayed, my glasses were steamed up and my eyes were pouring salt into my wounded lips. The cold beer was a life saver. The restaurant had no glass in windows so when it started to pour we had nice cooling gusts blowing through the restaurant. We staggered out into the rain and were lured into a Kashmiri arts emporium by a young teenager who was the son of the owner. I explained to him that I had no money and he explained that he "had no customers, so why don't we just look at my nice jewelry and have some tea". So we stayed about 90 minutes and had a very enjoyable time learning all about the trade between Tamil Nadu and Kashmir. We drifted slowly back home arranging a car for the morning.

Next morning I was woken by Surya excitedly jumping on me to tell me the sun was shining. So had my rightful walk in the sun along the shore after breakfast in a sunny dining room; he had usual puris and sweetish curried veges while I had mangos pappas pineapple etc and toast and marmalade. Realised we were in a tourist place when we realised all the other guests were Germans. I left Surya playing Prince of Persia while I walked in the sun on a deserted beach. Had a nice chat with a boy from Kerala who I think was telling me that he needed money to get back there. I pointed out that swimming trunks did not have pockets with money in the so he said no problem please just talk to me in English. So we sat on the sand dune and talked about Kerala. As we had no Electricity in the morning I had no difficulty in getting 10% off our bill. So off to the Savera in Madras only to find there were no rooms available. I pointed out to the manager that I had been told in a phone call from UK that it would not be necessary to book. Fortunately I remembered the name of the manager who had told me this so they managed to find a room. Afternoon and evening was very wet so spent a lot of time watching the Sharga cricket match between West Indies and Pakistan. Then went to bed while Surya wrote Christmas cards and letters.

Saturday 13th. I had my usual early morning (4.30) drive through deserted Madras with Surya in the back of an old Ambassador taxi. Nothing seems important enough to say. He was allowed into the departure hall (a new arrangement) so this was a little more civilised than previously. I feel so sad, partly for me and partly for him. I must go. See you all soon (about 11 hours I hope). If you have read this far, Libby, thank you again for tolerating my Indian visits. It is difficult to define exactly why it is so important for me. Obviously it is wonderful to maintain my friendship with Surya (and Kiran) but it is much more than that. I feel a better person from living in a completely different culture, and loving the place as much as I do. I don't have to say that it has become a very important aspect of my life. I am so grateful to you all for this.

So, Libby, Clive, and Hugh this is yours, with love, from Chris.