

Diary 2005

Text in italics refers to the time that the diary was being written, often a few days after the Diary Day.

Saturday / Sunday 22nd / 23rd January. *I am writing this on Tuesday evening while listening to the first music since my arrival. This is Schoenberg's 'Gurrelieder'. It is absolutely glorious like a grown up oratorio by Richard Strauss written for huge orchestra, choir and soloists. I bought this in my New year bonanza and brought it here to dutifully get to know it. I will now have to ration myself to avoid excessive familiarity. The soprano is Jesse Norman.*

Having just completed last year's diary I note that this year's lead up was rather less stressful than last year [no Leigh thesis], the only real problem being that I could not find my lecture notes from the previous year. Hunting for them fitted into some more paper clearing in my office which was no bad thing. I was so pleased to find them as I had forgotten how much new stuff I had prepared last year. I had also spent a lot of time trying to clean up my computers and had incidentally backed up everything onto DVDs. *[My problem with the laptop – turning the mouse on and off etc – has returned and some things are very slow on it but it seems stable enough].*

There was of course the usual stress of being overweight on main baggage (27.5Kg) and laptop plus camera bag was overweight. We had a nice peaceful drive up with Libby and Hugh; I was very glad that they came but at the airport I felt quite strongly how daft I am to leave my nice family behind. At the pre-checked desk there was no problem as they did not even glance at my cabin baggage or my overweight case. After all that I was very irritated by the many people who blocked the aisles with their wheeled 15 Kg bags. I was given a BA blanket again and had a very good flight with great food and two films that I especially wanted to see: Ladies in Lavender with Judy Dench and Maggie Smith, and

The flight was full so there were long queues at immigration. I started near the front but our queue had someone with very poor eyesight and with wildly trembling hands who processed only one passenger while the competing queues passed three. I was therefore in the last ten to get through. It didn't matter as even after changing my money I still had to wait another 25 minutes for my luggage. I was in the last 20 for this and the nervous Germans had already started to fill out lost luggage forms. I begin to feel quite racist as I struggle to even see the carousel through the three layers of carts and baggage already heaved off. Poor Imran had been waiting since 23.00 for a 12.45 plane that spewed out its first passengers at 1.15 with me being almost the last out, forty minutes later. We had the same car and driver as last year – provided by Surya's Kalyan Residency hotel and were soon down at Mahabalipuram at the Golden Sun Resort – booked by Surya's friend Maria Susai. The security man woke the reception manager who gave me a very friendly though bleary eyed welcome. "The tsunami has bought you luck – you have new furniture". The hotel had been full – for Christmas- but no one was lost. Imran of course wanted to play with his new digital camera which is a great success. In the morning we saw that the Bougainvillea survived but a lot of the trees and bushes are dead or disappeared and the beach shelters swept away except for their upright poles (deeply embedded coconut trunks). There are huge piles of broken masonry, smashed chairs, tables and miscellaneous wordwork and furniture all now neatly piled where they will not offend the eyes of the guests. The pool is working but looks a bit yellow and tasted salty. All along the beach to M is similar – with the boundary walls smashed and beach cottages damaged. Near the town it is all rather sad with a few fishermen sorting nets but very few boats and the shell seller's stalls washed away; they are still there but sitting on mats on the ground. I felt even more guilty

ignoring them. There is quite a slope up from the beach and this protected almost all the beach restaurants from too much damage. The beggars have the obvious story that they have lost their boats and have children to feed. On one empty part of the beach there was a rather symbolic heap of broken painted plaster and wooden gods half buried in the sand; they had obviously been collected and heaped together. I am not sure what you do with a god who has not protected you; they could not even protect themselves. In the afternoon I visited Dan Gilbert's old home – the Scripture union Camp and the Cornerhouse – a sort of family camp. Jacob now runs it and he was very keen that on the way home I stay there instead of the hotel, and he convinced me that while that may not be a good idea, it would be a very good place to stay with Libby some time.

In the evening we ate lovely Masala fried fish in the empty restaurant next door to the more famous crowded Moonraker. I was asked did I want my usual table – they must have had very few customers to remember such things or perhaps they rely on customers not remembering; I did and they were right.

Monday 24th January. After a delicious puri massala breakfast we set off for Tirupati, immediately setting off in the wrong direction because the driver prefers the route through the outskirts of Chennai while I prefer the rural route. His route was in fact faster and by-passed both Kanchipuram and Tirrutani so I can't really complain. It would do not good as it seems to be the practice to leave all decisions to the driver. We stopped for a thalli lunch in a 'garden restaurant' and arrived about 3 O'Clock at the guest house where I was immediately welcomed by the old lady cook who has now dyed her hair jet black. I was settled into my usual room within a very short time while Imran went off with the driver to get my phone card and a few rugs and towels etc. Sai gopal soon appeared to arrange for me to start work the next morning – 'familiarisation lecture for your funny accent'. In the early evening we went by auto to the restaurant at the start of the town (Balaji Colony) and had too much chicken biriani with too much screeching film songs and Imran shouting down his mobile phone. He had started to worry about bus times so we hurried to the bus station leaving me to go shopping for the electric extensions, lunghi and bedsheet (for less than two pounds I will now have nice sheets instead of hairy blankets). It was quite a relief to be alone after two days of constant imran, although 'alone' was not really appropriate for the Netaji road by the main rail station. I bought a 5m plug board and extension cable for £1 and then had a call from Imran who had a problem. There were no buses or trains. They were all on strike for a good reason. A senior local politician (Mr Ravi of the Telugu Desam party) had just been assassinated by professionals, hired it is assumed, by the opposition (Congress). Ravi had started life as a criminal; a hired murderer according to Imran, a sort of Robin Hood according to Satheesh. His followers, many of whom seem to have remained criminal, went berserk and burnt about 300 buses. While waiting for Imran to meet me at the rail station an old hairy sadhu with stick and cooking pot came up to beg; "please sir give to this beggar – you see sir I am a beggar so you should give me money". I started to tell him I knew what a beggar is when another even hairier wild old man came up and grabbed the first, telling him to stop behaving like that "you stupid old beggar can't you see he is English and you do not know English"; "do not worry sir I do not want anything from you, I already speak perfect English which is more valuable than anything else, I just want to help you lose this old man". I sneaked round the corner leaving them holding each other's rags and shouting into their bearded faces.

Imran then appeared through the crazy crowds, looking his usual cool self. So I lost my solitary stroll down Ghandi road, suffering instead the unnecessary care of Imran – careful chris you must avoid the cows, careful chris the Jeeps will not stop for you, mind where you are walking, no chris you do not want that shop it is expensive. The last example was especially daft as it was the

manager I wanted to see (old friend of Surya's) and I did not mind paying a few rupees extra. After returning to the guest house I had a call from Sai Gopal who told me that the University would be closed next day as a curfew has been declared; he later came in person to ask me to stay in the guest house and keep away for the town.

I then had a call from Madhu from Rajampet arranging to come next day to visit. Madhu is the ex-friend of Imran who had forbidden me to be friends with that bad guy. To save fuss I don't mention Madhu's visits to Imran, so I told him it was Sateesh arranging to visit next day.

Tuesday 25th January. The day started with the cook waking me at seven, to deliver two cups of nice sweet tea "Bread omellette sir?" "If you insist". After this traditional boring breakfast Imran went off with a friend to try to arrange a lift home, so missed Madhu who called in for 2 hours before going off to see family friends and to catch the train to his home in Chittoor. Almost immediately Sateesh arrived for a nice chat about the Department and his plans; he is a teaching fellow, now registered in a different University (Guntur) for a PhD. SVUniversity will not register him because there are only two staff in the Department which already has 6 PhD students. For seven years they have had permission to recruit 5 new staff. Each time one is appointed someone from the other end of the caste system challenges the appointment in the courts so it is annulled and then the reverse happens. Imran then arrived to be introduced to Sateesh – "of course you phoned last night to arrange to come"; "no I did not phone". "Don't worry Imran I have so many friends called Sateesh". "No problem Chris I just want your happiness" (his heart is in the right place). The rest of today was spent with Imran coming and going (eventually left in the late afternoon to return by train). On his way to book his seat in the morning he had just paid his auto when some thugs came up and smashed its window for strike breaking. After I was finally left alone, I spent a few hours sorting out my camera cards, organising the computer and going for my first brief stroll in the University campus. There is a new STD phone booth (little shed) directly opposite the guesthouse but they close at 10.30. I met Sai gopal on his scooter as I returned; he had come to tell me that tomorrow is Republic Day, a national holiday, so no lectures tomorrow. I had my first dinner here for some years. It was very good but spoiled by a lot of mosquitoes. At one time I had seven sitting on my rice (good hindu vegetarian insects). I fled the dining hall calling for chai in my room please. This arrived together with two of last years Previous students. I showed them all the old photos and promised to visit Bashir's home near the University. At 10.20 I went to the new phone booth to call home but they were wrapped up like corpses on the floor. I left them and walked down the road to my usual one but there was a power cut there and we could find no way I could read my numbers and phone. So I used the mobile and had a nice chat with Hugh and Libby simultaneously on the home phone. Now it is midnight and so to bed.

come randi
go pundi
meals bojunum
enough charlu
sit down kurchoni
thank you namaskara mu
friend snay he thu du
yes sarrai
no vordu
how much yan tha
son kumaradu

daughter kurturu
brother anna or tamadu
student vettee
visit me bandoo vu
goodbye ta ta
you like nu vu bagundavu
i like you

Wednesday 26th January

I am writing this on Friday lunchtime and have the usual struggle to remember events of a few days ago and am tempted to give up writing this as it will be similar to other years. But I thought the same last year and was glad I continued so off I go.

I guess I started with my usual walk and bread omellette. I remember: I had a wonderful opportunity to take good photos of woodpeckers on a dead tree but somehow I had set the camera wrongly so got a sort of red and gold abstract picture, giving quite a good demonstration of why they are so attractive. Today is Republic Day so everyone has a holiday so I went off to the village Thumulagunta [means thorn pond] armed with cameras and a few photos from last year. There are even fewer fields now on the way there and a proper small road where my favourite track through the sugar cane fields used to be but I musn't be a grumpy old man. On the way I was stopped by a very old man on a bicycle whose name (Joseph) I miraculously remembered from 8 years ago; he is the retired librarian. We stood in the 32 degree sun grinning at each other – if you can grin with only about three front teeth (him). All the mud roads and paths in the village are now white concrete which must be good in the monsoon but not so much for the chickens. Almost immediately one of the people I had hoped to see emerged from a house so I avoided the problem that I could not accurately remember the names. I now know he is Balaji (18) who I wrote to a month ago to tell him I was coming. I had thought that I was writing to his friend Venkat (16) who I first met when he was about 10 years old when he proudly showed me his beautiful fields. These two could be brothers; they said they were but then they use that word to describe good friends. I requested coffee, distributed the photos and then of course spent nearly an hour photographing and showing the results. There was a constant changing stream of children in and out of the house including a one year old boy who was a plaything of all the others. They took turns to have photos holding him. Eventually Venkat arrived, about a foot taller than last year. So off to his house and more photos including his very ancient grandmother who, bent double crept into the room and then bent further to do a sort of foot kissing thing (my feet her kissing). I assumed that I did not have to do mutual grooming and just sat on the floor beside her when she was persuaded to sit down. I was then escorted to the edge of the village by Balaji and Venkat who asked to visit the guesthouse later in the day [they didn't come]. The walk home was dull and hot, as was lunch (sorry dahl and hot). Madhu arrived later in the afternoon, thinner than ever but also remaining gently charming and intelligent. We lay on the beds chatting and both fell asleep, waking to the rattling cook delivering tea. We then went by auto to the Kalyan Residency for dinner, mine being a rather dull sweetish Kashmiri pillau rice covered with pure silver foil. We wanted to go and deliver the presents from surya to his family but found the rail crossing was still not negotiable and the new tunnel not yet complete so we had the excitement of walking back to the station, down off the platform and stumbling in the darkness 400m down the tracks to a hole in the fence by the tunnel site, followed by a cautious balancing act on two pipes on the edge of the hole to the DR Mahal road and through the narrow lanes to Surya's

3rd floor flat which is reached by an outside set of stairs and a narrow walkway high above the empty, rubbish filled vacant lot next door. Madhu was a good interpreter as Surya's mum wanted to ask so many questions about Surya's time in England. I wish I had thought of printing some photos from Christmas. I will take the computer later. We avoided being force fed a second dinner by me promising to return next evening for dinner. It feels so strange and a bit sad to be going to Surya's house without him and his mum must have felt the same. We had a peaceful stroll back to the Nethaji road corner for an auto home [the peacefulness was really a reflection of the lack of Imran who is always accompanied by talking or listening].

Thursday 27th January. I talked till late with Madhu last night so woke up late for my bread omellette. At last I started work today - bioenergetics to the 'Previous year'. This time I started with a long chat about me and my family and university etc while they became accustomed to my funny voice. This was followed by little reunions on the stairs, corridors and gardens with last years' Previous year students (who although the previous year's students are now final year). After Madhu left I slept in the afternoon then set out on a hunt for a torch as my classy little silver one has stopped working again. So I now have a nice big blue plastic torch for £1 exactly (with batteries). I went through the wonderful Ghandi road to find the shop of Sasi's uncle to check that I had the correct phone number for him. A boy there came running after me and said he would take me to his house which was nearby but he was not there. I left my number and he phoned the next day. While doing all this Maria Susai phoned to remind me to go to dinner at Surya's. I am enjoying exploring more on my own this year, tonight's triumph being to find a relatively safe route to the other side of the rail tracks. Ignoring the warning that I must have a platform ticket, I wandered about the station around and over the heaps of pilgrims with their shaven heads, bundles of sleeping grannies, and miscellaneous lepers and beggars until I found a footbridge which doubled as a dormitory for sleeping orange-clothed sadhus and other religious black-robed derelicts. The bridge led to a vast open space bounded by the station on one side and the Choudharies on the other. These are the free dormitories for pilgrims. The space was lined with the pilgrims coaches and was unusually peaceful for Tirupati, with recorded religious songs wafting about the groups of pilgrims sitting on the concrete eating their dinners. In the middle of it all stood a rather gaudy coach braveley advertising 'Jesus Saves' on its front back and sides. My guess was right and I found a way out at the far end near the cinema -DR Mahal - and so to Surya's where we were soon joined by Susai who was good company. He is a catholic who really wants to be a priest but after 4 years of training (while a teenager) he was told by the Jesuits that he was too independent for an order that was based on obedience. After more telling his mother about Surya (only the happy bits) Susai drove me home on his big bike, to a long tutorial with Sateesh who is doing a PhD project on extracellular amylases produced by thermophilic Bacillus. I am sure he will get a PhD out of it although this has been done to death by industrial groups, but I cannot really deflate him too much. He kept telling me he wanted advice so I told him he should write his literature review now (after 6 months) and that I want all the main headings for it by Monday and a list of Figures and Tables by the end of next week. "But sir we usually leave this until we have finished the practical work". I told him that he did not have to accept my advice even if it is good. "No sir I will do it". He has already collected a huge number of papers and has most of it rattling around loose in his head so it is a genuinely good idea.

Friday 28th January. *I am writing this while waiting for Sasi in the evening while listening to Berlioz's The Trojans (1st of 4 CDs).*

Because of my sleepy day yesterday I guess I didn't sleep so well last night, waking every hour or so. There are no curtains and the security lights are on all night so there is no hint of the passage of time. I absent-mindedly got up and shaved before looking at the clock and seeing it was only 3.40. When I got up at 6.40 I was shocked to find there was a powercut and it was cloudy and almost dark. No sun, no computer, no reading. Character will overcome and off I went for my usual walk. As I was feeling subdued and concluding that the birds had all left Tirupati I saw the first of 6 good sightings of Golden Orioles. I had some difficulty in getting good pictures and had the same problem with a great opportunity with a Hoopoe; both these birds are rather shy. I then found that I had put on the wide angle lens instead of the telephoto, so I will probably never see these birds again. Imran phoned to remind me that I am supposed to be going to Kadappa to visit him this weekend. After a lot of false starts based on wrong information from him and Sai Gopal about trains, Susai has sorted everything and booked me on the Chennai/Mumbai express tomorrow morning at 9.30; I will be taken by hotel car 10km to Renigunta junction to get it. I get 30% off for being a senior citizen but must take my passport to prove it. The students were pleased to be given a Saturday morning holiday (why do days of the week have capital letters?). After my lecture this morning I sorted lectures and spent the early afternoon reading a biography of the physicist Richard Feynman before setting out in the golden Tirupati late afternoon sun to walk into town.

On the way, I was taking a picture of an oxcart driven by an old man and young family sitting on the back when he embarrassed me by stopping the thing, a noisy process attracting a lot of attention, by which time I had already taken a nice picture. So I pretended to take another (CARD FULL!) before hurrying away to make my usual detour around the cricket ground where I had a nice chat with the football coach who is in the police. He asked me if I had heard of the local special school started by ?? Ramakrishna?? They are all over the world and have pupils from every country; they sound like Hannah's school so I must find its real name and hunt it down. The internet cafe was open so I wasted 40 minutes deleting CSO committee group emails to eventually find one from Hugh which was nice but trying to reply led the programme to shut down. I had emails from Cary and Skriskanthan (from Sri Lanka) and from Sivamani; his family were fishermen and lived almost on Chennai Marina beach so I had written to him. My letter was forwarded to him where he now lives with his wife in France. His mother had returned from her morning walk on the beach only 5 minutes before the tsunami washed everyone off the beach. Slightly frustrated I gave up the emails and went for a quiet nice dinner at the Adithi restaurant only to realise that it was too dark to read. Then "sorry sir no prans; sorry sir no muttons; sorry sir only chickens". So I had masala chickens and fride rise. I had forgotten chickens are rather casually mutilated so was attacked by sharp bones in my hunt for protein. All was forgiven for the butterscotch ice cream. Sasi had phoned earlier to say he would visit here at exactly 7.30. He turned up at exactly 7.40 with 4 friends to say that they had to do some job in Chandragiri, 16 km on the way to Bangalore, but he would be back exactly 8.30. Still no sign at 9.00 which is good as I have now caught up with the diary.

I have finished the novel I was half way through when I left home (The Kite Runner; a beautiful book based in Afghanistan) and am now rushing through The Kalahri Typing School for Men – hence my discipline of reading the Feynman biography which unfortunately has little literary style although a very interesting subject. It is a poor contrast with last year's Churchill by Roy Jenkins.

The Trojans is written for huge orchestras and choirs all singing in French of course; it is all a bit unrelenting so I will soon change it for Bach.

Sasi finally arrived at 11.00 only slightly apologetic but said it was ok because he had told his mother that he would not be home till 1.00. So I had two hours to catch up on all his news etc. He is still tall (of course) and handsome and is very proud of a slight hint of a beard.

Saturday 29th January. *I am writing this on Monday evening while listening for the first time to Britten's Death in Venice; wonderful. Remarkably the words can be easily heard and so it is rather distracting.*

I am off today to Cuddapah or Kadappa to visit Imran. My usual driver came at 8.20 with the Kalyan's Ambassador to take me to the station 14km away at Renigunta for the Chennai/Mumbai express, stopping at Kadappa. We Picked up Maria Susai whose job was to look after me onto the train. It was a lovely sunny morning to wander about the platforms and it was much less frantic than Tirupati station where there is always a lot of stress with lost and worried pilgrims from all over the country. The train had 83 coaches and even Susai had to spend nearly ten minutes hunting down my reserved seat. This was with a family travelling from Chennai to Pune – 23 hours travel. The father worked in Chennai Port Authority and said that the only real damage in the tsunami was to two ships smashed against each other loosing most of their cargoes. He knew my old friends Prof Shunmugasusundram and Mrs Prof Radhshunmugusundaram who were famous in the University of Madras as always being punctual. We arrived within 3 hours and there was a happy Imran in a hurry to get us to his home for lunch. Unfortunately I failed to persuade him to buy my return ticket then. After a huge lunch of spicy roast chicken legs we slept for an hour then set off to go swimming at the garden hotel. As usual with Imran this involved rounding up some of his friends with their motorbikes, followed by the irritatingly dangerous weaving hooting dusty drive through the crowded streets of Kadappa. The pool was a little cooler than I like and was almost empty so Imran could show off his new strokes to his friends while I soon heaved up onto the side to dry out in the evening sun. After a clean peaceful time we undid everything by another busy dirty drive back for tea and snacks at Imran's home. We spent the evening at a 'Festival' celebrating something by wandering amongst huge crowds of happy people around a sort of fair ground with stalls selling junk, and cow contests. Imran was worried all the time that I would be bored but I enjoyed it, especially the warm gentle wind. We had dinner with Kingfisher beer in a small garden restaurant, as usual ordering too much, with tandoori goat and prawns.

Sunday 30th January. Imrans's house is newly built at the end of a winding mud track between other newish houses, all surrounded by rough ground sprinkled with rubbish heaps inhabited by street dogs, chickens and the occasional cow. He got very excited by two domestic white geese that visit a tiny pond opposite the house; I preferred the buffalo with their attendant cattle egrets. His house has a main room – that is the television room with his father's deck chair and a padded bench seat, a dining room that is also his parent's bedroom, and a good size kitchen. The loo is outside in a little shed in an enclosed yard with water taps etc. In the morning I found myself gone native again, idly watching a neighbour as he also wandered about his little yard as we cleaned out teeth. Steps lead from the yard to the flat walled roof where there is an extra single room with Imran's big bed, his computer and books. The roof is slanting corrugated iron. I had a fairly good night but was disturbed by a high wind that howled about his room. At about 4 in morning I sat outside on the roof under the stars in my shorts and vest to cool down.

Breakfast was Masals dosa [as I had with Libby at Kerralai] AND the dreaded bread omellette. I stayed behind to read and watch the world go by while Imran went to buy my ticket home. Forty five minutes later he was on the phone: "Chris we have a situation here; the afternoon train you want is full, shall I get the slow train or the night train, or the express bus or the ordinary

bus or a night bus?” After 3 more situation reports I accepted the inevitable and agreed to return on the six O’Clock Monday morning train. So we spent another nice afternoon swimming in a busy pool and being interviewed by the usual inquisitive boys. I enjoyed a peaceful (no Imran) interlude with his father watching the whole of a program on Pearl Harbour and one on the King Cobra – on Discovery Channel. He keeps asking why I do not grow older whereas he grows more ancient by the minute; Imran says that I should tell him the truth – that I do not drink so much whiskey. When I drifted back up to the roof where Imran was writing up practical classes he seemed very subdued, then explained that there was a problem with my camera. He had tried to use it (against my wish) and had deleted his pictures by pressing the format button, fortunately losing only 6 or so pictures but they were rather special ones that I had taken some trouble to get. “Chris Chris you christians say you should forgive my trespasses why don’t you forgive me chris” – this while lying on the floor pretending to kiss my feet. I told him that I had given him a camera so that I would not have this problem. So he is now forgiven and has a new instruction never to touch my camera in my absence. Before going out to eat I insisted on going for a short walk to a slightly wilder looking place that I could see from the roof. Typically I stupidly believed Imran when he said no need for binoculars or cameras. The walk took us to the edge of a river where there were black winged stilts. We had dinner in the same garden restaurant as previously but up on the roof. Monday 31st January. The day started with a cool peaceful motorbike ride through Cuddapah to the station for my six o’clock train, which should get me to Tirupati by 8.30 for my 9.00 lecture. It arrived half an hour late and was slow so I changed my lecture to 11 and had no problem. I can’t remember much of this day or the next two days. Mahdu came

Tuesday. Another cloudy day. Madhu came from Rajampet (100km 2 hours by bus) after college and we met at the Kalyan Residency at about 7. As I walked in I could hear quiet mutterings passed around the staff – “friend of Surya Prakash”. So I was bought tea immediately and sat sipping with a row of friendly faces peering at me. Madhu arrived on time and we walked by my newly discovered route over the railway to Surya’s home. His father had phoned earlier, extremely insistent that I go there for dinner, with any friends I like. Of course they just want me to tell about Surya but there is not much to say as I don’t want to hint that he is not perfectly happy with everything. They had prepared a rice dish especially for me that was utterly bland and was a struggle to eat. Madhu had very little and as soon as we were gone he rushed off to buy some apples and biscuits. “Do you people eat rice like that - it is too dull”. He was pleased that I agreed. We had a nice stroll back through the Ghandi road and home to a nice end of day chat about his plans etc.

Wednesday 2nd February. Outrage. It rained in the night, leaving everywhere feeling nice and fresh and still nice and gently warm. Madhu went off to see friends for the day and I had my usual two lectures. In the evening we went shopping for shoes for Madhu. For ‘Discipline reasons’ students must now wear socks and shoes and ties, most important shirts must be tucked in. This rule will continue to apply in the 40 degree summer. As it was the end of the month Madhu had no money so asked to borrow 500 rupees (£6) for shoes which was a pleasure to provide (not really a loan of course, although he will probably try to repay). Of course in the shoe shops in Ghandi road, they saw me and immediately showed him all the expensive shoes. He was finally delighted with very good black and white trainers. I then made the mistake of going to the Sundhri hotel for dinner where again the food was too bland but the pistachio ice cream was the best ever. He then went to the bus station leaving me to stroll happily alone through the crowded happy town and out to the student hostels on the way towards the guest house. I had forgotten how far it is, taking about half an hour to reach B block where the biochemists live. Earlier in the day I had paid my duty call to the

Biochemistry Department to see the Head – Prof Thyagaraju (the best of all of them). While waiting to see him I was captured by one of the research students who remembered me from previously. She has now arranged that I give a couple of formal research lectures (based on my Gordon conference lecture). I was soon surrounded by the final year MSc students with the usual self-appointed spokesman. In this case he was Vijay Kumar, a very slim smiling likeable boy who said that I was a legend in the department and could I please expose myself to them. I considered this and decided against it but said I would be happy to visit them etc. At the entrance to the hostel area I was sequestered by a group of chemists who then marched me to the biochemistry block room 42 where I collapsed on the tin bed, resting my tired legs and exhausting my voice answering their questions. We were interrupted by “sir sir your friend Suby”. This turned out to be their friend from Virology [Subramanian] who I had taught last year, complete with his earring and painted finger nails. In spite of this he is very shy but came up and hugged me like a lost father while the students all clapped. It is a shame that I can never understand what he says. They all kept me company all the way home – another mile before I collapsed on the bed, waking up at about 2.30 still wearing my clothes and glasses.

Thursday 3rd February. I had a nice text message from Clive saying he was enjoying every minute of his training programme and that on the inspection today the inspecting officer had congratulated him on his nice new shoes. Also had a message from Libby. These text messages are good things but not so good as hearing family voices. This made my day. I woke to what has become the usual cloudy start to the day. Also the usual power cut so my resolve to catch up with this diary if it was cloudy was deflated. So I had breakfast instead (dull rice patty things covered in very spicy samba). The sun had then appeared so I went for a short bird walk and was rewarded with my best photos yet of a golden oriole. Sateesh collected me for my lecture but I found that I only had about 80% of the boys and none of the ladies. This was the first sign of yet another ‘situation’. There are two student unions in India and they compete in a rather aggressive way. It is difficult to work out the details but these two factions were somehow involved when one group complained that another group was making too much noise late at night. So a gang of one lot turned up to confront the other lot and this led to fighting, police and hospitalisation. The VC was worried that this could all escalate and more students could be hurt so he has closed the student hostels where 90% of the students live. They were given one hour to get out so Tirupati roads apparently soon filled with students with suitcases going off to their homes – spread out all over Andhra Pradesh. So the afternoon lecture was cancelled and it will be next week at the earliest that they will be open again. So I had a nice sit in the sun (doing the easy crossword from the Times I brought with me) and then two hours writing this. I also had a visit from Sateesh who wanted more advice about writing his PhD introduction, and Sai Gopal called to check that I wasn’t bored. He soon made sure that I was [Actually that is untrue we had a good gossip]. I phoned Leigh for a brief chat and to remind him that our paper should be out today. He has already seen it and is going to town to buy a couple of copies of Nature for us. At last I have visited the dairy farm. It gets cleaner every year and as in many other places round here they seem keen to remove a lot of the rough undergrowth that supports my birds. I did get some nice pictures with the digicam, improved enormously by resting it on a wall. Just as the light started to go and I was on the way home I realised I didn’t have my glasses so tried to retrace my steps all the way back round but failed to find them. So I am typing this feeling slightly nauseous using my old spares. I suppose it will be worth another slower walk round tomorrow but I doubt if I will find them. *I am writing this in real time, waiting for Prof Srineevasulu to arrive to take me to*

dinner at a new restaurant in the town. I have forgotten again to buy biscuits so must remain hungry for at least another hour. Gunfire has just started down the road but it may just be fireworks.

Friday

I am writing this early Sunday morning while Imran goes into the edge of town (Balaji colony) to buy a Hindu for me and to get his pant ironed. Again I find it hard to remember.

I failed to find my glasses on a nice walk around the dairy farm but got some good photos of the larger of the bee-eaters (blue-tailed) on the same branch as the smaller green bee-eater.

None of the ladies was (were?) present at this morning's lecture. [Odd isn't; two is plural, one is singular but none is probably plural – they were plural when they were there so they remain plural when they are absent perhaps. I think I am being influenced here by reading the biography of the great physicist Richard Feynman who challenged every little assumption etc. I have just discovered that a question I cheekily, but honestly, asked when in 6th form physics was valid and can only be answered in terms of incomprehensible quantum electromagnetic theories: If I look at a light source in a mirror a line can be traced from the source to the mirror to my eye; a similar thing can be done if light bends through a prism on its way from the source to me. ALL of the light follows the bent path. My question: how did the light know to follow that path to the mirror. Similarly, light from the moon know where to go to find my eye – even if I have not yet arrived at that place]. Enough of that.

The reason for the ladies' absence is that there was a problem in the hostels. Two factions of students (arts of course) started to fight, the police were called and someone went to hospital. The ladies had guessed correctly what would happen next. The VC closed the student hostels (90% of the 4000 students live in them. They were given one hour to get out and go home to 'their native places' – spread all across the state of Andhra Pradesh. Within an hour the streets were full of refugee students with all their stuff in cases and bags going to find buses or trains home. So no students at all in the afternoon. A senate meeting has now ruled that the University is closed to students for the next week.

Iran has arrived with my Hindu so I guess my peace is at an end.

In the afternoon I set out for a long walk to the village area beyond Tummulagunta, starting with an auto to the outskirts of the village. It always takes the driver a few attempts to understand my impeccable accent and then they like to get me to say it properly, driving off laughing and shouting my corrupt version to the other drivers loafing around. I like to spread a little cheer wherever I go. The road was strewn with crushed garlands near the usual path to the village and in a nearby field there was a crowd of villagers doing something. I was later glad that I had not intruded as it was a burial. I walked on past the other village, avoiding some squawking ladies, presumably remembering me from previous years who wanted me to go in and do photos. After a pleasant stroll in the fields outside I asked directions from someone who was interrupting my birding anyway and was then aggressively questioned about where I was going so he escorted me through the village to the path to Tummalagunta which I had to follow just to get rid of him. I asked the way to the house of Balaji or Venkataraman and was led in triumph by a small dancing singing boy to Venkat's house. These two are brothers but seem to live in different houses. V was having a bath (splashing about with buckets in the little walled yard) and then came grinning and shivering to look after me – his chirpy mother scuttling off to get me coffee. Of course I had to take more photos but soon pleaded that I must get back to the guest house to meet Satheesh. Balaji and Venkat were supposed to have visited last week but they never came (too much work sir). We arranged that they would visit properly on Sunday evening at 5.00, that I would take them to a restaurant for dinner and then get them an auto to come home. Mother was very excited by this arrangement. I think it was the safely getting them home by

auto. Leaving the village is like pulling a spoon out of treacle (surely you remember that) – my entourage of teenagers and children gradually dropping off until I said goodbye to the faithful few at the proper road, still followed for another 100m by their shouts across the fields of bye bye, bye bye. Satheesh soon appeared and off we went to eat at the Kalyan residency. He had the usual Thali (to avoid decisions I think) and I had Tandoori panner – thick slices of cheese stuff skewered with pepper onions and tomatoes all accompanied by butter naan. Wonderful.

Saturday.

As there are no students I had the luxury of breakfast, before going for a walk in my usual morning pig farm area. My picture of Golden Orioles later showed that they were rarer Black headed orioles. Imran arrived by bike from Kaddapa (140km) looking cool after a 3 hour journey. After a short recovery time he went off to spend most of the day with friends here in Tirupati, leaving me to have a peaceful productive day producing the front page of the programme for the next concert plus a few internal pages. I even managed to finish the flyer for the following concert – in Romsey Abbey but I need to find a suitable picture of the organ there; we are performing the Saint-Saens organ symphony.

I should note that I am writing this late on sunday evening while listening to the second half of the Schoenberg Gurrelieder. It is not often that I come across a completely new piece of music that is so wonderful.

My concentration was punctured by a visit from Sai Gopal who is worried that I will be bored [only by him and his fussing]; he means well. I do my computing on the outer open part of the veranda which requires a lot of juggling with wires and extensions. I was just clearing this up to get indoors before the mosquitoes arrivevd when a couple turned up smiling joyfully - at seeing me in my shorts I suppose. She was in the MSc Biochemistry class of 2001 so only knew me from a few visits to the Department. She had bought her CV and her husband to discuss the possibility of coming to the UK to study; so I had to rather deflate them. She won the Gold Medal as best student and has a few years experience so I have agreed to be a referee if she writes to UK. They invited me to dinner next week which will be nice. One of the final year students (Huresh) then arrived to say hello. He had come previously, leaving his photo and a sentimental message in my book; he is one of the only students left behing in the great exodus as his parents live here. He chatted with the previous visitors while I cleared up some more and then as they left Imran appeared. After ten minutes all chatting he told me there were some other people waiting to see me outside. When I investigated I didn't recognixe them so told them they should come some other time and phone first. I then was rather embarassed that they might be Imran's friends but they were not. Huresh then assured me that they were not biochemistry or microbiology students; odd mystery. *I have just been atacked by an ant nearly 1.5 cm long.* Fortunately I could plead a previous appointment when Satheesh phoned to see if he could visit, as we were due at Surya's to have dinner with Swarna and her husband and mother. The little boy is now 2 years old and quite good fun al;though he greeted me with some word that means old granddad. Our dinner was excellent but I don't think they will feel I earned it. All the time they want to know about surya and there is so little I can say. Of course I am not going to say he is not completely happy with the situation. We watched a CD on TV of the naming ceremony of Suresh's new daughter. All sitting on the floor half undressed with ash-smearred tubby priests throwing water about etc. Most of the attention was on Suresh sitting cross-legged on the floor, separated from his wife holding the baby by a curtain made from a lunghi held up by to old ladies. Because she was born at some inauspicious time he had not been allowed to see her for the first few weeks and this was the first occasion. After the obligatory photos I promised I would try to call on monday before

they go back to Hyderabad. Imran sensed that they wanted to say something about Surya when he was not also there so I will try to go.

Sunday

I couldn't sleep for a long time last night, initially because Imran had fallen asleep as soon as lying down and he occupied both beds and snored. I then found the slight pain I had had all day in my hip joints had become sufficiently strong as to stop me sleeping, or rather keeping me half awake with thoughts of hip replacements. I was feeling considerable delayed guilt for not thinking enough about Libby's knee pains etc; I cannot believe I would be as uncomplaining as she is. This thought then reminded me of the value of aspirin so I woke myself up to make a drink of sol aspirin which got rid of the pain within 15 minutes and gave me a really good night's sleep.

We were wakened by the cook with morning tea and the news that breakfast was ready so we dutifully reported for our bread omelette. Imran had a little chat with the old cook lady who told him that she gets up every day at 4.30 and travels 90 minutes by bus to get to work. When I said that I am not surprised that she had been very grumpy this week I was told: "No Chris that is because her older son recently committed suicide by burning himself with petrol and her younger son has had a tumour removed which cost 4000 rupees."

After breakfast Imran played with the computer while I had a rather hot morning stroll during which I saw no birds whatsoever. Gopi then arrived by bus from Chittoor and we had a nice re-union. His character seems unaltered, still calmly accepting Imran's teasing and occasional bullying, but his voice has dropped an octave and he has a neat little moustache. We went for lunch to the place at Balaji colony (Harry's Cove) where I had dinner with Srinivasulu last week. We said that we did not want cool drinks (Pepsi etc) but were brought them anyway because the manager explained to Imran that I did really like them – I had 2 last week. That of course was only because Srinivasulu insisted on them bringing me two although I had said I didn't want one (come to think of it I suppose his interpretation could be valid). We then set off to go swimming in some new 'resort' out on the Trichanur Road. This resort has been a flop apparently and the only thing still going is the pool which we had to ourselves. It was big enough for a length to be an achievement and I swam it both ways. I was then the official recorder of the antics of Imran and Gopi, capturing some remarkable pictures of Gopi leaping into the pool, frozen in mid flight. The pool was surrounded by palm trees with paddy birds and a bit of open land with great photo opportunities for rollers and coucal but of course I had not brought my long lens. Soon after returning to the guest house Imran set off on the three hour mororbike ride to Kadappa, wearing a crash helmet I was pleased to see. Before learning that Gopi was coming I had arranged for two of the village boys (Balaji and Venkataraman) to visit the guest house to see photos of the village etc, and to take them out to eat. Surprisingly they arrived – on a single bicycle. Actually it was Balaji plus another 'brother', Venkataraman having to visit relations in another village. At last I have resolved the problem of how Venkat has so many brothers and that they live in different houses. They use brother to indicate a relation, usually cousin. They were very excited to see the photos including some from 4 years ago when I first went to the village. We had dinner at the Athidi restaurant where my frequent eater status attracts at least 6 observers at our table. They are all so unaccustomed to eating out that the choice is difficult but happily solved by all having a 'vegetarian meal' the thali, - lots of small tin pots of veggies and rice. As I finished first I went downstairs to the street to phone home where I interrupted lunch. Only Hugh and Libbie (ONLY??), it was so nice to hear them. We all packed into an auto for the ride back to the guest house where Balaji and friend picked up their bike and cycled off home after what seems to have been a very successful visit. Balaji even did the kneeling down to kiss my feet (I find it easy to cope with these appropriate gestures of respect). Gopi's bus home to Chittoor stops outside the guesthouse

and did not leave until ten, so we had time to lie and chat for an hour or so. The Gurrelieder has now finished in a blaze of glorious sound so I will put this away and have a nice read. Goodnight to you all, with love from Chris.

Monday 7th February. *I am writing this Tuesday night, listening to Britten's Midsummer Night's dream.*

Today was declared by Sai Gopal to be the beginning of summer as it was cloudless and very hot. In fact next day was cloudy again. I assume I started with a walk as I always do but I cannot remember. The students are still not here so I went in to the Department later than usual and at last managed to get on the internet at a reasonable speed and was able to see my Nature paper. I am very pleased. It is only a brief note under 'brief communications arising'. Remarkably Rucker (in USA) had sent in a similar communication dealing with nutritional aspects (also arguing against K&K's conclusions) which was printed with mine and it was followed by a reply to both of us by Kasihara & Kato. More important I managed to access my email and slowly downloaded his pictures of a rather self-conscious PC Clive. I am so sorry to have missed his big day. The hot sunny day provoked the therapy of clothes washing. After lunch of cold cardboard chapatis with some slimy green veggie concoction and of course plain boiled rice, I was collected to give a lecture on preparing a PhD thesis to the Research students plus a few others. Sai Gopal was going to attend but I persuaded him to leave and to read the notes taken by Satheesh. Sai Gopal did his usual silly introduction explaining that I had successfully supervised at least 10 PhD students (35 actually) and that I was there not to give a lecture but to interact with them. This seems to be a typical Indian activity – staff and students interacting. I think it was all useful and there were lots of sensible questions. I had previously had a frustrating time trying to advise Satheesh on his thesis introduction. He just could not understand that it had to be presented as if to be read by readers who know less than him. Fortunately I solved it by telling him to write it as if it was a lecture to MSc students and he immediately understood. I wanted to chat with Satheesh at the guesthouse but Srineevasulu insisted on driving me back.

Just as I was trying to decide whether or not to go for a late afternoon walk I was saved from the decision by Balaji from Thummulagunta arriving on spec on his bike from college. He had come to collect the photos on a CD from the village so we had some fun sorting them all out. His English is not very good but when I looked into his college books one was filled with literary criticism of poetry by Tennyson, Robert Frost etc. He read it out to me with no expression or even hint of understanding. I had an early dinner at the Athidi, struggling to read in the gloom while eating a dull Hyderabad Chicken Biryani followed by wonderful butterscotch ice cream. Having had a flash of genius I went to the Internet place to email Richard Tank to ask him to get a load of stuff for my orchestra programme (lists of members etc). I finished a nice relaxed unexciting day by doing a lot of photoshop stuff on my bird photos.

Tuesday 8th February. Woken by cook with tea at 6.45 I found it was cloudy so a walk seemed less attractive than usual. There was no power so could not do computer stuff or listen to music and it was still too dark to read. So I forced myself to get up and have deadly bread omellette, after which it was a bit sunny so I set off for a long walk starting with my usual close stroll around the pig research area. At my favourite corner where the open ground meets the denser wooded area there was a small flock of _____, very beautiful little birds with scarlet and gold underparts, very actively moving high in a tree. As I was struggling to get photos of these it very slowly dawned on me that the irritating knocking noise just behind me may be interesting. It was a coppersmith (a small 'tailless' woodpecker) knocking a hole in the tree just behind me. I have spent so much time

failing to get decent pictures of this bird which is usually so shy, or too high in a tree to get a good picture and here he was about 3 metres away. So at last I have great pictures of him. As I walked into the pig area with its bourgenvillea-lined tracks I was surrounded by the joyful sound of bulbuls (the best known Indian songbird) from a huge flock of red-vented bulbuls and red-whiskered bulbuls all flying like flycatchers in and out of the small trees. So more great pictures. I just missed a male Paradise flycatcher with its long tail streamers. A good start to a rather odd day. I spent the rest of the day writing instructions to myself for capturing and editing videos. At last I think I have a set that make sense to me. It is a long business. I then spent more than two hours writing a longer account of my Nature stuff, including material for which I had insufficient space, to send to Rucker. I will continue seriously with this when I get back. I got quite carried away. Venkataraman from the village was supposed to call in at 5.00 but he didn't come. It was a typical golden evening so I sat on the pavement outside the guesthouse with the camcorder capturing a typical cross section of evening traffic. I then realised when Madhu phoned that I had spoken to no one all day. At 8.00 I went by auto to Ghandi road and had a good chat with the Lunghi seller who happened to be discussing his recently-published guide to Esperanto (written in Te;ugu) wit Dr Ranga, Surya's Esperanto teacher. I have not seen Sasi since the first couple of days and his phone is being repaired. So I called into his uncle's shop and a boy there took me to his mother's house nearby (he lives with an uncle near the University). Luckily he was actually there so I had a nice chat and tea from his mum. He had thought that I was staying for a week in Kadappa. So we made a few plans before I stumbled down the dark concrete stairs into the noisy warm Ghandi road to walk to the posh Sindhiri Park hotel for dinner of Naneer Tkka Massala and butter Naan followed by strawbaerry icecream and a nice read before a quick auto home during which I got missed calls from Imran, Madhu and Gopi. So called them back then down to my diary while listening to Britten's Midsummer Night's dream. Must now stop as I am feeling very twitchy. Sorry Tatania I must to bed tis almost fairy time.

Wednesday

Another day without students. At last I was rewarded for my patience this morning when I had a great view of the golden backed woodpecker and took what should have been a perfect picture. *[I am writing this immediately after checking my photos into the computer; I have just found that it was not perfectly focused. This was pushed into its proper insignificant place by the last great trio in Der Rosenkavalier which always leaves the key board slightly damp. This was the piece that Claude played loudly as I came into the lab having banned all music from the lab; I just stood there tingling all over and recanted immediately – no music between 9.30 and 5.30].*

During my walk I met an old acquaintance from the dairy farm taking his alsation puppy to the vet. In our chat while waiting for the vet to cycle up to the Canine dispensary we chatted about England. "Which part of America is it in? Is it part of California?" Satheesh had collected me at about 10.15 to do some stuff on the internet. I had been asked (by email) to referee a paper on formaldehyde tolerance, by Howard Dalton and his students so I spent ages downloading the pdf file and then printing it out.

Madhu had a course exam early this morning and decided to celebrate it by coming on the bus from Rajampet, arriving just as I finished lunch of plain rice and green twigs in very spicy green slime. He came running into the canteen calling "key chris key chris" and hurtled out back to my room for a pee. He had been unable to get a proper AC coach and had to make do with the slow Express (the nomenclature continues to confuse me); so he's had a rather long bumpy ride with no sleep, having revised most of the night. *[Now listening to a late Beethoven String quartet].* This meant that after a brief chat we both fell asleep for an hour. He had been slightly envious of the swimming trip with Imran and Gopi so we grabbed an auto and negotiated a ride out to the Vintage Hill Resort (same as

before) only to find that they were cleaning the pool. The receptionist kindly phoned the Guestline hotel on the other side of town to check that their pool was open so we set off for our second choice. I still love driving about the place in autos. The Guestline is where we went swimming on the one occasion last year. It used to be the biggest most luxurious hotel in Tirupati but has gone downhill fast with the building of the big smart Bliss Hotels. It seemed to be empty but we found someone to take out money (75 rupees - £1) and had a really good swim. I really do seem to be getting fitter and can swim a few lengths without exhaustion. It is an odd pool, being the same depth throughout (about 5 feet). Madhu could only dog paddle but brilliant coach that I am I taught him a few proper strokes. The water was my temperature and I had a lovely floating time watching the kites and vulture soaring overhead. Of course I had to take some movie stuff of Madhu's swimming before a sun bathe with sweet tea on the lawn. We had paid the auto driver and friend an extra 20 rupees to wait for us so had a very convenient drive home. When I told Madhu how much I liked driving about looking at Tirupati life he suggested filming it which I did – just sticking the camera at everything for the 20 minute ride home. It is a little jumpy, as was the auto of course, but I will enjoy seeing it at home on television. Yesterday afternoon Venkataraman was supposed to have called in on the way home from college but hadn't turned up; rather irritating as it stopped me enjoying my late afternoon walk. No sooner had we got back to the guesthouse from swimming than he turned up today 24 hours late, with another friend from Thummalagunta. We had just finished introductions when his 'brother' Balaji arrived with Kotish, a charming intelligent 14 year old (looks 12). So I had to plough through more pictures of home and family etc. the pictures are great and I love showing them but I have them scattered amongst disks and spare drives etc. Of course I then had to take yet more photos of them all and then suffer the nervousness as they wanted a go with the camera; they are very careful and appreciative [*The great song of thanksgiving for recovery from illness has just started and everything seems to have misted over; amazing that these quartets have given me nearly half a century of joy. Thanks Ludwig, sorry you had to suffer so much to produce them*].

In the middle of the photography an elderly member of guesthouse staff appeared in the doorway, slightly agitated, waving at the boys. He had seen 4 bikes propped up against my little fence and had remembered the thieving boy Praveen of two years ago. Madhu explained that I had been a friend of their families in Thumullagunta for the last 3 years and he then wanted to see the pictures of their families before going away happy. After we had driven them off Madhu took me to his favourite restaurant near the bus station to sit in the dark surrounded by staring serving boys in their dirty khaki shirts and shorts, as we ate our Mutton biryani with our fingers from a steel plate lined with a banana leaf, washing afterwards by tipping water from our glassed over our hands into the messy remains of rice. [*The Grosse Fugue has now started; this remains my top desert island choice for its extreme Je ne regret rien energy and pure will power*]. Coming out of the supercooled AC bit of restaurant it was wonderful to be washed by the warm dusty fragrant air of Tirupati. I felt a little sad seeing the red Kalyan Residency neon sign lit up high above us, with Surya in London. There was still time for a gentle stroll to do some shopping. The 'gentle' is right although it is done amongst the bikes rickshaws scooters autos and crowds around the busy end of Ghandi road. Madhu used my teasing him about his rough cowboy style jeans to remind me that I had bought them for him two years ago and that he had no others. So we bought some in one of the many tiny shops with just enough room for 3 customers and one counter, the whole booth being lined with lockers packed with shirts and jeans. Having discarded 16 inappropriate pairs he found two suitable ones – a major problem being his 28" waist, plus a shirt. This was followed by some negotiations of the price; these are clearly marked but he still got 40% off, leaving a bill of 650 rupees (£8). After a quick sortie into the chaos of night-time Nethaji road for some spare CDs we autoed home for an early night but then

talked till very late, falling asleep while talking, only to wake up with the alarm a few hours later to send Madhu back on the 6.00 luxury bus. I finished both my books today. My Feynman biography and a great novel by Zoe Heller called Notes on a Scandal, strongly recommended by Germaine Greer on late night review.

Thursday 10th February. Students were supposed to be back today so I did some preparation instead of my walk and was picked up at 8.50 as usual by Satheesh. Sai Gopal had said all the students would be back. I had queried this because some of them lived at some distance and the hostels had only opened that morning. Satheesh's estimate was exactly right – 10/30 students. As they were fairly familiar with the topic I gave my lecture anyway but as more of a tutorial. When they know something they are keen to shout out the answer "isomerase sir"; of course it is not really shouted but whispered or nervously chanted – in unison giving the impression of a shout. Glycolysis followed by the TCA cycle. It was really nice to see them again.

Back at the guest house I sat outside reading Howards paper and after my afternoon lecture wrote most of the report. He had obviously not read the paper that had been distilled out of a thesis with some fairly elementary mistakes so I was able to do a useful job. Sasi was supposed to have called at 3.30 but didn't turn up until 5.10 accompanied by two friends. So I had to show them my photos of Sasi and the bit of film with him. Then more pictures of family holiday etc. I then felt a bit of a loose end when they left so strolled slowly down toward town, intending to call in at the student hostels on the way, but at the entrance met my smiling student from last year whose name is xxxxxReddy but he tells me to call him Madhu. He was going to his regular trip to the small Sai Baba temple down near the Church. So I went with him. All very peaceful although full of students. After 10 minutes we went visit Geeta?? who lives in a nice modern flat with her mother. They were both very pleased to see me. We stood around on the roof for a time as the sun finally set to be replaced by a new moon, lying on its back. We then had a noisy dinner at the Athidi where they were full with guests and a little boy's birthday party. Paneer Masala with butter naan followed by butterscotch icecream.

Friday 11th February.

Vijay Kumar came as arranged at 9.30 in the evening with Subramanian. This unusual link of biochemist and microbiologist is because they met at the church and are "both quiet serious students".

Saturday 12th February. I am struggling to remember anything about the last few days. [*I am writing this on 14th night while waiting for Vijay to arrive. I had tentatively agreed to go to church with him on Sunday but had to explain on phone while zipping about Chittoor on a motorbike that I would not make it.*] Madhu phoned to say he would be able to come and get me to take me to Chittoor tomorrow which makes the whole trip easier to face. He came late in the evening after I had waited 3 hours for Sasi to arrive; when he didn't I autoed down to Harry's Cove for prawn biryani and icecream, getting back as Madhu arrived.

Sunday 13th February. After a breakfast of bread omellette we went by auto to the main bus station where we found we could not get a reservation on a good bus for such a short journey (under two hours). In the early morning the atmosphere in the bus station is very holidayish, with so many destinations, types of buses, languages and types of people, many of whom are returning pilgrims with their bald heads or silly hats. We caught the express bus (basic and slow) which was good with open windows. Madhu is always gently solicitous (by contrast I suppose with Imran who fusses noisily, asking what I want but rarely noticing the reply). Having told me he never gives to beggars Madhu punctuated his chat by leaning across me to drop coins in to the tiny beggar children's hands. All my feelings about going to Chittoor are based on previous very long tedious journeys on the half

built roads. These are now fast and we had a good journey. A happy smiling Gopi met us at the bus station and we all went off to Madhu's house which is above an engineering workshop, for a huge lunch of rice and mutton (mainly rather disgusting gristle) and chicken (smashed up bone bits) and curried liver which was great. We finished with some sweet noodly thing with cardomoms. I was then led into Madhu's bedroom and told to rest. Before I could protest that I am not an old man needing his nap I fell fast asleep. As always I am not told what we are doing but somehow this was Ok with Madhu as he seems to do things I want to do. In this case we joined up with another friend *damn there is a power cut at 6.30 and the computer only has 7 minutes of battery life*. He was also called Madhu. we set off on two motorbikes for a safe 30 minute drive through glorious rural countryside up into dry hills, the air being almost too hot to drive through. Our destination was Agaronda where there is a small temple at the top of some hills, reached by a long very very hot climb up steps. The temple was made of strawberry ice cream but that seemed to be a mirage as it was just gaudy concrete. At the very top above the temple there was of course a great view and cooler wind. After a good drive back we set off on rounds of visiting, first stop being Gopi's little palm thatch house next to a railway line in a rural bit of the town. His parents are so nice, his father having a huge Handlebar moustache, and his two brothers keen to communicate but none of them speaking any English. So as usual I get out the camera which gives us all something to do. I cannot remember much about other visits except that they include brothers and sisters of Madhu. I convinced him that I did not want a big dinner so we had leftovers from lunch which was pretty grim. By then it was getting late so he had the brilliant idea of getting a friend to drive us back to Tirupati in his brother's car. The brother was lying ill on the floor (obviously very drunk) so he was easily persuaded – especially after I made a fuss of his pretty little daughter and took a load more pictures. The car ran on calor gas which we h

Mondy 14th February. I had some difficulty in shaking Madhu awake to get up for his bus to Rajampet to attend his morning lectures but he eventually left by 6.30. He phoned 2 hours later to say he had only just got a bus out of Tirupati. I tend to take my friends' journeys for granted. As I found on Sunday, to catch a bus is no trivial thing here. I could not have my walk this morning as I had to prepare my lectures: photosynthesis for Previous year and continuous culture for Final year. After my morning lecture I had my Monday morning therapy of sweeping the floor and washing shirts etc. summer does seem to have arrived – it was 33 or 90 degrees so I sat in the sun for only 20 minutes and then tried to sort out photos. This has become difficult because of the lack of space on my hard drive. Susai came at lunchtime to plan car and hotel for next week and I arranged for him to change some £ to rupees using the Kalyan Travel agent- so easy compared with most years. As I was driven in the blasting heat to my lecture after lunch by Srinivasulu we passed Vijay Kumar so I hopped off the bike to apologise for not keeping to our Sunday arrangement of going to church as I was in Chittoor. We agreed that he would visit this evening [*I am waiting for him now*]. As I walked into the clean cool open entrance hall of the Virology building Subramanian (a final year microbiology student – Subramanian, the affectionate boy with the earring) came up and hugged me, whispering “do you know today sir”; yes of course; “please be my valentine sir”. I don't get offers like this every day. “Of course”; “Oh thank you sir” and he scurried up the stairs. Dear old Prof Srinivasulu lumbered up the concrete stairs to the top floor to introduce me to the students, as it was the first of my lectures to the Final year students. As he started by saying, I needed no introduction as they were my main group when they were in their Previous year. He talked some general purpose Great scientist stuff and then lumbered away, switching on the 6 overhead fans on his way out. I still get a wonderful feeling of goodwill from the students and the landscape during lectures; they sit smiling expectantly and through the wide open doors the hills of Tirupati glare in

the heat. I felt quite sentimental taking the register and still remembering most of the names. Daya the smile was in the back row struggling to keep awake; when he finally dropped off I lobbed a handful of small chalk pieces at him causing him to leap to his feet in embarrassment to cheers from the boys and polite giggles and clapping from the girls.

At about 4.30 it was still 33 degrees so I walked very gently down to the town, taking lots of general movie pictures of Prakasam road, Ghandi road etc. I wanted to do this in the light but it does not give the ideal picture as most of the traffic is stressed people going home; within an hour or two the place is filled with relaxed students and shoppers and there is a friendier atmosphere but it is too dark. The last part was in the Govindarajaswamy temple. I was filming near the shoe stand because the temple music is loudest and wildest there when Leigh phoned. I have failed to make any contact for two weeks. So as has happened here previously I had a slightly disjointed but nice chat in which I seemed to get his answers to my comments before I made them, interrupted by the wild music. The thought counted. I had arranged to meet Susai for dinner – partly to stave off slightly aggressive invitations to visit his house etc. I waited for him in the Kalyan residency foyer, waving casually to a person I vaguely recognised as I went in. When Susai came he introduced me; it was the owner and manager who was disappointed that I didn't recognise him so had to pacify him with white noise about not wanting to disturb such an important man. I was very hungry but bravely delayed dinner to accept his invitation to have coffee which was heavenly. Susai is working nights so had only had 3 hours sleep (his usual apparently). We went by morobike over to the Bliss hotel where he was keen to have some beer. They do not serve beer in the restaurant - to avoid offending the Brahmins so we were ushered discreetly into a dark bar where after some confusion we ordered food as well. I had roast fish (bits of fish in breadcrumbs) with rotis (half way between chapattis and naan) and we shared curried peas (delicious). As the hotel people all seem to know each other I had to be introduced to a lot of people in the dark as Surya's friend. He had had a training period in this hotel. Soon after I came back Vijay came together with Subramanian. They were very good company and I rehearsed my special Formal Biochemistry lecture to be given using my Gordon conference power point presentation with them. They are both Christians and explained how they read their bibles every day. *[I wrote this after they had gone, feeling bad that I had neglected it. I am now continuing at 5.30am, woken by a mosquito, and listening to the last Act of Berlioz The Trojans].*

Tuesday 15th I cannot remember anything about today (writing on Thursday). I probably did what I do most days. At about 6.40 the cook brings two cups of tea. It is still dark. With luck I get a shave before the morning power cut. If not I go and have breakfast which recently has been idlis with hot curry followed by two cups of scalding tea. Then a walk with cameras, failing to film a dramatic confrontation between a Koil cuckoo and a golden oriole which led to the oriole fleeing. I saw a completely new bird, or rather three of them, huge blunt looking birds flying from a low tree across the cornfield. I cannot find them in the small bird book. Satheesh picks me up after his usual greeting of hello sir have you finished your breakfast to which I always want to say no can't you see I am still eating. My 9.00 lectures of the first year are now on photosynthesis which is quite a challenge but they seem to be enjoying it. After the lecture two of them asked if they could come to the guest house this evening so I agreed of course. I am usually driven home after the lecture by Srineevasulu who has the dreadful habit of standing up on his scooter whenever we passed a senior member of the university. I then actually have a sunbath for half an hour (maximum) before preparing lectures etc. I had my usual lunchtime read of Ferguson's 'The British Empire' disturbed by a retired botany professor who has gone the mystical way of many senior Indian scientists. He gave me a lecture on diabetes, he assures me is caused by a virus but there are no scientists with the vision to pursue his

idea. He then told me about the importance of “the oneness of DNA”; it is like our hearts which beat in a similar way which means that I can exercise control not only over my heart but yours also and also the hearts of other animals and other living things. He has told Sai Gopal that the evolutionary origin of viruses is the religious mark that good Hindus paint between their eyebrows. After the afternoon lecture I sorted out a few photos and went for a long walk into the still sweltering setting sun out towards the agriculture college, hoping to photograph a kingfisher but it wasn't there today. I did see two birds I hadn't seen before this year but it was too hot to be really enjoyable.

Wednesday 16th. I had a depressing lecture to final year students on continuous culture during which I made the mistake of asking a question and finding they did not seem to have understood anything. I managed to hide my irritation with them and dictated a set of statements that they can memorise. It is difficult to keep cool in any sense of the word when it is 35 degrees. Even driving on the scooter to the lecture is not cooling; it is like a fan assisted oven. Immediately after the lecture I had to go and give a formal lecture to the Biochemistry Department. I had to fight off Prof Sreenivasulu from driving me to the Department which is less than 50 metres away. The lecture was in the Zoology lecture theatre, being the only one available that could be blacked out and which was big enough for both years for the MSc class and research scholars. I was giving a slightly modified version of my Gordon Conference lecture and it had taken 3 days to get permission to use the projector to link to the laptop. Of course no one knew how to get the thing to work. “I find that if press this button it sometimes works sir”. It didn't but changing the cables around a few times solved it. We then milled around outside on the balcony corridor drinking scalding milky tea from tiny near-molten plastic beakers. The audience was enjoyably responsive so the lecture went on for 90 minutes but I was specially thanked for treating them like a serious audience. After a ludicrous little speech from Parthasarathy (the gibbon-like senior professor in Biochemistry) during which ‘famous biochemist’ ‘eminent philosopher’ etc could be detected amongst his confused mumbled embarrassed English, I was presented with flowers and a present from the students. I knew so few of them – mainly from visiting the hostel on a single occasion so this really was quite a surprise. The present was a clear plastic sculpture of a mother and child (I think it was Mary with Jesus) with a small clock built in and coloured changing lights. Vijay Kumar (final year biochemist) had sat near the front smiling encouragingly during the lecture and he took over, introducing me to the other students and then getting a friend with a bike to drive all three of us back to the guest house where we had a nice chat, before they drove off calling out that they would pray for me.

Madhu was due at 5.30 with two college friends but fortunately came late as Sai Gopal arrived to introduce me to a friend (Suneeha) with her husband. She was very beautiful and came up shyly to give me her PhD thesis on microbial degradation of keratin (hair protein). I recognised it immediately as a thesis I had examined a few weeks before coming here. She was a bit shocked when I told her that I had read it and thought it was good. I had asked that a proper contents page should be added and lists of Figures etc. She said she had followed the usual University custom. So I told her she could blame the University for the fact that she would have to re-bind her thesis. She didn't mind as I told her I had recommended she should pass. As soon as they left Madhu plus Kalyan plus Shekar (?) arrived and I had to plod through photos for them. Kalyan was a very slim witty affectionate student and Shekar was rather fat, boring, asking dull questions. I was still feeling very tired from my two and a half hours of lecturing but for Madhu's sake forced myself into chirpy mode.

“Where shall we go to eat?” “Your choice Chris”. So we went to Bliss (appropriately next door to Paradise). I still find it a comfortable surprise to go out of my relatively cool room into the hot

evening air- in this case for an auto drive round the wide back roads to the far side of town to one of the best hotels. As is true for all hotels in Tirupathi there was a wedding party there. It was explained to me later by young Sumanth on Sai Gopal's roof that there are 800 weddings this weekend in Tirupathi; I have been invited to two of them. We had a nice dinner of mutton biryani for the boys and roast chicken with butter naan for me; roast chicken is the name for bits of chicken off the bone (30 rupees extra) roast in chilli etc. Very good. The main topic of conversation was related to Kalyan wanting to be less slim – could I recommend some vitamins for this. He and Madhu have the same wish. They don't want fat but muscle -“Chris I want to be like you, you don't eat but you are so strong”. We dropped Madhu's friends off at the station for them to go to Cudappa and we went back for a relaxing chat into sleep interrupted only by Kalyan phoning me to say that he missed me!

Thursday 17th. I was woken by Madhu at 5.30 because he could not sleep and we would not have much more chance to talk. I then drifted gently in and out of sleep for an hour before our morning tea arrived. I had the rare experience of a real smile from the old lady cook which might have been related to the fact that I gave her my after-lecture bouquet to her. Madhu couldn't face bread omellete but it was good today because it was obviously freshly prepared. He went off to Rajempet as I was taken off for my lecture, after which I prepared my Friday lecture – mainly by modifying my wednesday lecture by incorporating more family pictures and a few birds. In the afternoon I had an enjoyable final 90 min lecture on continuous culture with the final year students before being taken back by Srineevasulu. It was too hot to even sit in the shade on my veranda so I sat inside with a fast fan and the door open while doing some photo stuff. At exactly 5.00, as agreed. Sai Gopal took me off to his house for dinner. The early start was so that I could photograph the returning crows returning to roost near his house on the edge of the hills. I had wanted to do that last year but not had my camera with me. He then made a big thing of it explaining to his family what I wanted to do, so I had him getting in the way pointing out crows all the time and explaining that three eagles were nesting in the tree opposite. I suppose he means kites. His 14 year old nephew (Sumanth) from a very backward village lives with them so that he can study in Tirupati. He is remarkably similar to Surya when he was that young but more talkative and good company. He enjoyed wasting lots of film on the digital camcorder while I tried to take the definitive Tirupati sunset which was not a success. There was a forest fire up near the pilgrim steps going up towards the Tirumula temple in the hills and another on the hill on the far side of the town. We had a sensible smallish dinner of peas and cabbage with chapati, pumpkin curry and a sweet made of beetroot. I escaped to the roof to avoid more talk with his family friend Suneetha about her thesis, and had more chat with Sumanth about his school etc. Sai Gopal then phoned Prof Naidu who has retired to Hyderabad so that we could have a chat and I could make my annual sincere speech of thanks for his first invitation to Tirupati. We have agreed that in the year after next I should have a special silver jubilee visit. After little speeches of thanks and promises to write to Sumanth with photos (I must do that) I was driven back across town to my planned early night. I have been fighting mounting irritation with the silly way that people keep trying to plan my time for me here and nearly exploded when Sai Gopal told me that “tomorrow afternoon after your special lecture and farewell function you will be entirely free, so I have arranged for Prof xxx to come and see you at the guest house; he is visiting Norwich for a conference and wants you to give him travel directions”. Really! I told him that I was probably busy but he told me no you are free. I heard no more about this.

At last, I thought as I collapsed at about 9.30 to catch up on 4 days of unwritten diary while listening to Schoenberg's glorious Gurrelieder. After ten minutes the brother of Nagaraju (Seetaramaraju) arrived. He is a new PhD student in physics. I didn't meet him when I stayed in

their village a few years ago and he had been directed by Nagaraju (now in Taiwan) to come and find me. This was the third time he had come by auto this evening. His English is better than Nagaraju's and we had a nice talk. He has been a physics teacher (intermediate, plus two and degree) for four years which he really enjoys but his older brother told him he must do a PhD which will increase his salary two-fold doing the same job. His visit was interrupted by Suneetha with husband and little son plus a photographer from town – come to beg a photo of me with her. They have all now gone and I am back to Gurrelieder and diary.

Friday 18th February. Today started with a typical Imran farce. He woke me to tell me about my plans for the weekend. It is strange this visit as I am planning to leave, with Imran, early Monday morning and so have two days weekend holiday to fill with no lectures. I have still not adapted to the Indian casual arrangement so had carefully planned my farewells: I told Imran he should arrive Sunday evening; Madhu was coming Saturday and staying overnight, and Gopi spending most of Sunday with me, as he had had exams and wanted to come from Chittoor without the others. “No Chris; it is better if we all come on Sunday”; “please leave me to plan my own life”; “yes of course Chris but I can collect Madhu on the bike on Sunday and we will meet Gopi here”; “please leave me to make my arrangements”. I then phoned Madhu to be told that “yes Chris Imran told me what he was planning but we made our plans Chris and we will ignore him; I am coming Saturday morning and leaving early Sunday to visit friends in Vijayawada, as I told to Imran but he does not listen so we will ignore his plans”. Gopi phoned later to confirm he wanted to spend Sunday just with me so I finally persuaded Imran to accept all this after agreeing that he could drop off his bag on Sunday morning and meet me later at the end of the day.

I had my final lecture with the Previous Year students this morning – just finishing the last part of photosynthesis. Because they had been taught the old fashioned way they actually knew about the Hill reaction so I could tell my little story of how I asked Sue Hill in a practical class if she was the product of the Hill reaction, to be told that he was her father. Only half the class were there so I could not really do my special question/answer thing about marriage etc. The absent students were the most enthusiastic boys and my guess was correct that they were preparing for the farewell function. Usually this is late in the afternoon of my final day and that had been the plan for today, Sreenivasulu being ‘out of station’ on Saturday. There has to be a guest of honour and, as later explained by the Previous year students, this is good for the Department as they can show me off proving what a good department they are. They had also left my special research lecture (with Powerpoint presentation) to this final day. The Dean and the Principal were not available in the afternoon so we had to fit in with their timetable, as explained by Srinivasulu. This left me with the exhausting schedule of a morning lecture till 10.00 then my formal lecture at 11.00 and the farewell function at 12.00 “UK time sir so that we do not inconvenience the Principal and Dean”. So my function was hijacked for the politics of the thing. “There is no need to return to the guest house you can stay and interact with the research scholars”. As suggested by Sateesh when he collected me in the morning, I left my laptop at the guesthouse so had to go back for that and a nice chat with him. We returned through the blasting 34 degree wind to arrive in plenty of time to set up the projector for my lecture which was in my usual lecture theatre but with blinds down and doors closed. Of course the projector did not arrive from the Principal's office until exactly 11.00 so I distracted myself from my nervous wait by filming the students decorating the room for my farewell function (Christmas type decorations and pretty drawings on the blackboard). No one knew how to use the projector but we solved it eventually as the place filled up with all the first and second year students and research scholars. I had to skip a lot of it as I was told I must stop at exactly 12.00. I had inserted

a lot of family photos etc and illustrated the ‘story’ of my research with examples of where i had been wrong and postgraduates were right – a little fight against the hierarchical Indian approach (the senior is always right). They seemed to enjoy it. Needless to say, the chief guests at my ‘Felicitations and Farewell Function’ were nearly half an hour late but this gave technicians and clerical staff etc time to come and join in. I still enjoy the ritual of being decorated with a garland of roses and ushered to my seat at the front where I was soon joined by the Dean, Principal, Sreenivasulu and Sai Gopal. The others all prevent the garlands from being put around their necks and just stick them on the table in front of them. Two girls then stood up and sang a little gentle meandering prayer, all half ones and Oms. A representative or two of all the categories of student and staff are then invited in turn to say a few words which is always a little embarrassing as the students are so reluctant and have to be cajoled to do something. They then address the Mr Dean, Dr Rjahendra garu, The principal, Dr Ravishankar Garu, Dear Professor Sreenivasulu garu, Dr Sair Gopal Garu and our dearly beloved esteemed Professor Chris Anthony Garu. A final year student Basha did all this then said that “your visit was the most important event so far in our academic careers and I can think of nothing else to say except that we love you sir”. I accept all this gracefully of course, hiding my emotions as a true Englishman must behind my roses. The Principal stood up and read them out the exam timetable and told them that poor exam results could ruin their lives. I was later told that this is all he ever does whatever the function he is addressing. The Dean stood and explained that he was delighted to have this opportunity. He had recently been elected to the Royal society for Tropical medicine in London and now at last he could express his gratitude in person to an Englishman. Sreenivasulu was most coherent and made a big thing of how I had emphasised how important it is for students be a little bit rebellious and to think for themselves etc. So he had got the message but I was later told that if anyone challenges him in any way they are severely reprimanded. My final speech was the usual stuff about them being the best group so far which is always true for at least one aspect. After a final vote of thanks we were presented with paper plates with spicy crisps and a piece of cream sponge cake. All this took a lot of time and I was keen to talk with the students and take a few photos which was eventually achieved after I reminded Sreenivasulu that the students would soon have to leave for lunch at their hostel. Sai Gopal then sensibly suggested that I return at 4.00 to have more ‘interaction’ and photos. So I was waved away on the back of Sreenivasulu’s scooter, swerving dangerously as he stood up to bow to the Principal as we lurched through the narrow gate out of the Department area. The cook had gone as it was nearly 2.00 but I spied a tiffin tin with some cold green lentil slimy stuff and a couple of cold cardboard chapattis so had them while reading the last of Ferguson’s survey of The British Empire (good or bad?) which is a brilliant concluding with a question that if we conclude that the British Empire was not good who would we have preferred in the last part of the century – Germany or Japan?

After this slightly grim lunch which I finished with my last two squares of Bourneville plain chocolate, I collapsed on the bed beneath a full speed fan and slept for two hours. I phoned Satheesh to come and collect me but he persuaded me that Sai Gopal was a bit silly and should have said 5.00 (not 4.00) as all the students were in practicals until then. So I went back to sleep. Back at the Department we had a crazy photo session with the students clamouring for individual photos with me, autographs and a chance to use my camcorder which captured very well my frustration. I hope I have the courage to not erase the film which shows me being typically irritable trying to line them up for photos. Remembering the anticlimax of previous years, I rejected Sreenivasulu’s offer of a drive back to the Guesthouse, giving myself the opportunity to invite four special students to eat with me that evening. I felt like a sheepdog trying to extract a few sheep from the flock as I wanted to be discrete. I half succeeded. Of the four I invited only two came eventually plus four of their friends –

not a bad result. They included Basha (final) and xxxReddy (Previous year) and Subramanian who I had forgotten to invite (the final year student with high voice, very gently character, red finger nails on left hand and a jewelled earring at the top of his ear).

As arranged they turned up at about 7.00 and we walked in the still hot air down to get autos to the Athidi restaurant. We had a very good time although they told me I was rather dull (this means quiet not boring, honest). One of the uninvited students sat opposite me and fussed all the time, trying to put stuff on my plate and even trying to give me his icecream while I was eating mine, later offering me his last mouthful on a spoon –“last is best”. I couldn’t face a whole late evening entertaining them so got them to do a few things for me in the little shops nearby (mobile phone topup etc) then autoed back with xxxReddy. As I am here for another two days it is easier to part company as I tell them to phone if they want to call to the guesthouse to see me before I go. I had a nice chat about xxx plans for the future which was interrupted by young Vinod – Surya’s neighbour who came in shivering from the cold air having motorbiked up from town by way of the railbridge under which all the cold air from the region accumulates. He came in and they chatted for a bit. He is shy and so would not say much and I soon had to send him off with a promise that I would see him at Surya’s next evening.

Saturday I had a disappointing bird walk as they all seem to have gone. Some of the tallest trees have lost most of their leaves and I suppose they have gone off to find more further north. Madhu arrived by mid morning as he said he would and immediately went and ordered tea. The cook brought this very quickly with smiles. She always responds very well to Madhu and rather reluctantly to Imran; I do not know why Imran never smiles when asking her for something or when talking with auto drivers. After a very nice hot spicy lunch we collapsed on the beds for an hour and then drove off to the Guestline hotel to go swimming. After arguing for what seemed five minutes with the young auto driver {knocking 20 rupees off the 60 rupee asking fare) we had a very noisy ride out to the hotel which is on the Hill side of the town beyond the Kapilatheertham waterfall temple. The noise was the drivers tape machine blasting film music at us and the whole of GiriPuram. At the same time Madhu had a noisy chat with him. When my phone went off they stopped talking and the tape was instantly switched off so I found myself bellowing at Surya’s father that yes we would go to his house in the evening but not to prepare food. Last time with Madhu it was almost uneatable bland stuff. As usual the hotel seemed completely empty but one word (swimming) to the single reception man produced a nice elderly lady from a side room who took us and gave us big towels, charging about £1 each which is worth it for the privilege for a completely empty warm pool. It is the same depth in most of it (5ft) which is nicely sociable as when tired it is not necessary to cling to the side. Gently drifting on my back with the kites lazily soaring above and the sound of the parakeets interrupting Madhu’s chat passed an hour quickly. Madhu then suggested that we drop in on Kapilatheertham on the way home. He had negotiated further with the auto driver who had waited for us and took us to the temple where Madhu suggested he came with us. It has been so dry that there was no water at all in the huge tank, used for ritual bathing. There were little groups of people collecting stuff from the damp mud; I guess they were clearing rubbish but motivated by the fact that some people throw coins in. It was far less crowded than the last two visits but there are even more stalls selling stuff and even a public toilet. As soon as we entered we met a college friend of Madhu’s so had to take photos which attracted a security guard to come and explain this was not permitted. On the way back we stopped to have tea with Madhu’s uncle, the auto driver also being invited. Unfortunately he was not in so no tea. We were two miles from the town centre but I saw the little boy in the green shirt I had photographed and filmed eating water melon on the

Prakasam road earlier. When I tapped him on the shoulder he laughed wildly, grabbed my hand and dragged me over the piles of rock and sand by a building site with me waving goodbye to Madhu staring bewildered at my kidnapping (captured by a kid?). I was pulled down a small alley way to be introduced to his mother. He then requested a photo with her but she was definite that she would not be in a photo, wrapping her sari end round her face and whirling out of range. So we settled on a couple of photos of him on his doorstep. I later realised that I had not got him to write his name or address so I can't send him copies; a pity as they are very nice pictures.

After we returned I had a visit from Subramanian to say that Basha had arranged a treat for me at his house two hours later at 7.00. Basha collected us to take us there, in the Balaji colony area, to find that the treat was a full blown dinner cooked by his mother with just Basha, Subramanian, Madhu and me. We had the usual forced feeding ritual, some help being provided by Madhu who was nicely protective and quite fierce in his rejections of the heaps of mutton and chicken that Basha (a meat eating Muslim) was trying to foist on us. It was slightly odd as Subramanian is a Christian and is fasting for Lent which means no meat but only huge handfulls of plain rice with curds. Surya's father phoned three times during the meal to check that we were coming. Each time I emphasised that we could not eat as we were just finishing a huge dinner. After a lot of photos by Basha of every combination of me and family, we autoed to Surya's, being intercepted on the way down the alley by Vinod who then joined us. Of course the first dreadful sound as we entered was that of cooking tins from the kitchen. Surya's mum started laying a table, provoking Madhu to leap up and explain that we could eat nothing. We both felt ill from our excessive dinner and had to reject even the suggestion of just one spoon of each dish. We had to accept a sweet dish of Halva which was exactly what we had last eaten at Basha's where it was not sweet and was unpleasantly filling. This version was also sweetless and even less pleasant. Surya's father explained that he had taken two days' holiday especially for me on my last two days. So I asked if I could come to dinner the next (last) night and so I was forgiven for rejecting tonight's dinner.

We strolled back into town through the pilgrims' Choudharies by the station to do some shopping (phone card etc), Madhu sadly quiet as this is his last evening with me. We chatted ourselves to sleep with the fan still doing its life saving work.

Sunday. We forced ourselves awake in response to a mobile phone alarm at 5.00 for Madhu to have a cold bucket shower to set off for his train journey to Vijayawada. This was my first real goodbye and the worst "Chris Chris don't forget me Chris" as he waved, running across the cool sand from guesthouse to the road to get a bus to the train station.

As a distraction I swept the room thoroughly and tidied up ready to pack later. At about 7.00 Imran phoned to say that he was angry with Madhu because he had called to collect him in Rajampet on his way on motorbike from Cuddapa. I told him that Madhu had done exactly as he and I had told him and was now on his way from me to Vijayawada. About 3 hours later he arrived and was clearly not intending to do as promised and go off to spend the day with his friends. I told him that he had to do as planned and that he could phone later in case Gopi and I were going swimming so he could join us. He went off with fairly good grace after I told him that I had rejected Madhu's request to join us in Mahabalipuram (this would have been very expensive and I had promised Imran). Soon after, Gopi arrived and immediately launched into the computer to make disk of his pictures and ones from last year that he had not received from Imran. After a nice lunch and five missed calls from Imran we lay beneath the fast fan while I was brought up to date with Gopi's plans and his family news etc. We then relented and told Imran we were going to the Guestline to go swimming and he could join us. Typically he then said he would bring 3 friends so that I could meet them.

When we arrived we found a full scale Situation with great debates on the rule that was being enforced – that shorts must be worn; this is the alternative to the usual underpants practice. So they borrowed torn ill fitting shorts from the hotel, putting them over their undies, so missing the point I guess. Again we had the pool to ourselves although this did include Imran’s noisy childish friends. There was then the problem of returning from the Guestline as we had one moptorbike between six and anyway Gopi and I wanted to go to the zoo park. Eventually an auto arrived and Gopi and I jumped in and left the others to sort themselves out. After a lot of negotiation with the slightly drunk auto driver we went to the zoo which is under the foot of the hills out towards Chandragiri beyond the guesthouse. We then found we could only go in for one hour and then we got lost so saw no lions or tigers and again there seemed to be no birds. It was a beautiful evening and a perfect place for a quiet stroll so that was a complete success, with Gopi thanking me for an Imran free day and a request to take him there again next year. When we got back I was very irritated to find Imran sitting outside as I had arranged that we would next see him at Surya’s house at seven that evening; his response was typical “ok chris I will meet you at 7.15 at the guest house”. I sent him away, feeling righteous but slightly cruel, but Gopi confirmed this was the right thing to do as Imran would stop him talking to me – not through some bad intention but inadvertently as he takes over everything. We finished doing another hour of computing then more chatting before going off to eat at Surya’s, meeting Imran at the door at 7.30. Susai also came and Vinod called in for some of the time. We had a very nice sensible-sized dinner and then lots of chat about Surya and a heap of stuff to be taken back for him which Susai explained he would take from us later as it was too heavy to take. Imran convinced them finally when he told them that you could not take food onto the plane (2 kg of sweets). I drove back with Imran while gopi was taken by Susai to the bus stand to get a town bus back to the guesthouse. As soon as we got there Imran did exactly as feared earlier – he immediately took over Gopi to show him some computer things etc. He then did another typical Imran thing and very kindly offered to drive Gopi the 2 hour drive back to Chittoor which he did, even showing he had learned something and going off for twenty minutes while I said goodbye to Gopi. He returned next morning as arranged at 8.00 UK time (ie not Indian time).

Monday I had originally planned to leave at 8.00 but Susai had persuaded me to change this to 9.00. I got up at 6.00 to start packing, a hateful job, interrupted by the usual 6.45 powercut while I went and had hot bread omellette tiffen. At 7.00 Madhu called to say that he was back in Tirupati (on the way home from Vijayawada) and could he come to say goodbye. He soon arrived and then went off to the bus station. At 7.30 Srineevasulu and Sai Gopal came to say goodbye, slightly resentful that I had changed plans so they had to go off to start some exams. I told Sai Gopal that I was leaving at 9.00 and he typically responded “OK sir I will be here at 9.15”; “Perfect” I said [so missing him]. Satheesh came to say goodbye and so did other research scholars including Anthony Johnson. Basha and Subramanian appeared again for about the 5th goodbye with more photos, this time with a little ritual of us standing with lit candles. Vijay Kumar from Biochemistry (the boy who invited me to church) appeared for another farewell with promises to write every month. Susai arrived at 8.0 with the car – just so that I was sure it would be there, exactly as Imran appeared on time. Amongst all this I was still packing, problems being deferred by sticking lots of stuff in plastic bags. As people began to move things to the car I saw the cook looking through the window of the mess hall and rushed around to give her the only tip I give which is 300 rupees which were kissed and tucked away somewhere so she could do a proper smilingg Namaste and even shook hands. At exactly 9.00 we drove off, a triumph of the will. We had to go to the Kalyan residency to drop Susai, to pay for the car with credit card and to change £30 cash. This took 20 minutes and we were

then really on our way. Our usual driver could not come as he had jaundice, the replacement being an older hyperactive 40 year old man with a shaved head and baseball cap. We were told he knew the way and we would be there by about 1.30, perfect for lunch and a quiet recovery by the sea. As usual the journey started with great promise being relatively cool in the car, driving through the small short cut roads around Renigunta through beautiful rural Andhra Pradesh with its strange rocky escarpments, paddy fields, sugar cane, palm trees and wayside simple villages. The driver was good and rarely used his horn. About 10.30 we stopped for breakfast of puris and potato masala. This should have taken only 10 minutes but the driver disappeared. A further 20 minutes later we found him in a phone box. He then insisted on having another 15 minute breakfast break. An hour later he stopped under a shady tree and said he hadn't slept for 3 days and wanted a 2 hour rest. He was very talkative with lots of energetic arm waving so Imran cleverly diverted his attention by asking him about himself etc. He then swapped with driver so he could have a rest and we trundled on at a safe but slow 30mph during which the driver had no rest but energetically gave Imran a driving lesson. They swapped back as we got near the town of Poonamallee after which we had a long series of disasters caused by the driver's certainty that he knew the way. He clearly did not and even when I showed him the map to explain he insisted in going the wrong way. I became more and more irritated and slightly annoyed with myself for being so upset by such a trivial thing. The final straw was when he refused to take what I knew to be the correct route and managed to ignore the great East coast scenic road and go a backway taking at least twice as long. Any other time this would have been wonderful, driving over the rice stalks laid out in the road surrounded by harvesting and rural activities. Eventually we arrived at 3.20, total journey time of nearly six and a half hours. Within 20 minutes of arrival this was all forgotten as I drifted half asleep around the pool lulled by the cawing of crows and the rough shingle sound of the waves.

Tuesday