

INDIA

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Tirupati

Jan 17th Sunday. *I am writing this Thursday evening listening to Shostakovich 1st string quartet.*

After 2 weeks of worrying weather – ice and snow, closing airports etc – the weather on Saturday was comfortably wet and today was dry and sunny. I got up at 05.00 and English Rose Collection taxi was all ready at 5.30 to drive me the 60 minutes to terminal 5. As I say every year I would feel relieved if suddenly I was not going but staying at home with Libby and Hugh and Peggy.

I have just changed from aggressive Shostakovich to cool Sibelius 6th symphony.

When I asked for a complementary upgrade I was told “no harm in trying, but not today”. The flight has to be full apparently. We had a straightforward flight during which I finished most of the Sunday Times. The slim bearded Arab potential plane bomber in my row turned out to be an Indian software engineer working for a year in Dallas.

Jan 18th Monday. Immigration was rapid as was money exchange [horror £1 = only 67 rupees]. Then the real horror started with my bag not appearing until about the last 10 bags. While nervously waiting with quarrelling puppies in my tummy [I don't do mere butterflies] I phoned Moin to tell him not to worry – that I will soon be out. “Sir I am not there; I am here in the forest on the way to Chennai”. The travel people at Kalyan Residency said he could not have a car as planned [and paid for] at 6.00 but had to wait until 9.00. He persuaded them to provide the car at 8.00 with the same driver as last year – Mohan. After one third of the journey the car stopped. So they sent a replacement. After another third of the journey this stopped and they sent a third car. When I called they were waiting for this one. Moin was very distressed of course and nearly incoherent. To my question have you got the car he replied yes. Then after more chat explained that it was broken. I told him I would call again soon – to give time to think and to make a Plan. I thought first of going to the luxury of the Trident – 5 minutes drive away so I could wait in comfort; fortunately my brain was still functioning and I moved to Plan B, arranging for Moin to come direct to Mahabalipuram, and I went there by taxi alone in a fast excellent drive at about 60mph through the wide deserted streets of Chennai – by the old route south of Guindy park out to the East Coast Road. The driver was called Anthony and got excited that we must be related [he ignored the fact that his *first* name is Anthony]. When we arrived it was the simplest Golden Sun arrival ever. I had booked direct with the Manager [Rahaman] and he had ensured he was woken as soon as I arrived. Room 14 near the pool. I unpacked a little then walked out the long drive to get phone reception near the road to keep track of Moin's drive. The total driving time was 10 hours, arriving at 5.30. We soon were asleep, me too hot in only shorts under a fast fan and Moin wrapped in his coat and a blanket.

The hotel was almost empty, the only other guests being 6 Germans from Bavaria. We had our first breakfast at mid-morning – Dosa Masala and coffee. Moin had never seen the sea before and was a bit nervous about the noise of the slight surf. This had kept him from sleeping well, aggravated by my thoughtlessly pointing out how high the Tsunami water came in the room [the ceiling]. I then swam and he slept and read Stryer, for an exam next week. He was very pleased with my gifts [a Lorus watch half price at £8 from amazon], my old copy of *Eating plants* and Dawkins' *The Greatest show on Earth, the only show in town*.

We did little that day except wander on the beach and sleeping and reading. Just before sunset I walked up to the small fishing village to the north past The Silver Sands resort. I was almost immediately met by a man I talked to last year who wanted me to go back to his house to have dinner of whisky or champagne. I assume that if I had accepted he would have had to rush

around to find these; I doubt that he keeps champagne on standby in the hope of such an illustrious visitor coming. The sun disappeared behind cloud as it set so colours were rather muted. As usual none of the fish on the menu was available for dinner so I had fried prawns and chips for dinner. *Now overwhelmed by the great 7th Symphony of Sibelius.*

Jan 19th Tuesday. We both slept well, partly because I explained to Moin that the sea never comes up more than a metre and there was no problem with him being drowned in the night. Puri Masala for breakfast. I had another gentle day by on the beach in my lovely new hat [and shorts] and a lot of swimming while Moin continued reading Stryer's Biochemistry. He gets really excited when he finds new things there. He knows more than I do about some of the topics that I am teaching during the next 4 weeks. In the late afternoon we drove into Mahabalpuram and went to the shore temple [7th century]. Moin did not believe that it is carved out of rock until a nice friendly local man gave us a useful lecture when we went to look at the carving of Arjuna's penance. Carved out of the rocky cliff behind the stage for dance demonstrations. The rock is so hard that it looks as good as new after 1300 years. We ate dinner in the Golden Sun restaurant before going to say goodbye to the Bay of Bengal and Orion lying on his side.

We finished the day with Moin reading Dawkins aloud to me; the first chapter on how absurd it would be for classics lecturers to have to waste time proving that the Roman empire actually existed, or in 20 century history to have to take seriously 'holocaust deniers' when trying to discuss Nazi Germany. Of course I did have to explain what all that was about as his knowledge of world history is rather limited. The 2nd chapter was on 'Evolution is *only* a theory, explaining the 2 completely different dictionary definitions of Theory.

Now listening to Jessye Norman singing Schumann's songs Frauenliebe etc, with tears in eyes struggling to continue to write.

Jan 20th Wednesday. Moin had some work to do in Tirupati so asked if we could leave early which was a good idea; we left at 7.15 and arrived at the Guest house exactly 4 hours later after a good drive. While stuck in a traffic jam in Trittanur we followed an auto with this advert: Boody bilding taugt.

The driver, Mohan, earns 1200 rupees/month plus 200 rupees per day when away. He drove very safely and rarely used his horn and had of course suffered a 10 hour drive on his first day [night] so I gave a tip of 300 rupees which he kissed before putting in his pocket. He then called Moin to the back of the car to ask him to thank me properly because he has no English.

Our arrival was the most efficient ever. Usually there is debate over which room, and comments that we were not expecting you today sir etc. As soon as Ramachandra Naidu, the steward, saw us he shouted to 5 assistants to arrive and grab our bags and rush up the stairs to the room. All this was achieved by Sai Gopal who, hearing that other visitors were expected went the day before to the guest house and hid the key to 'my room' in the personal drawer of Naidu - then phoned him to tell him where it is one hour before I arrived - to ensure that it was not wrongly given to another visitor. Last year they had to evict some senior professor from 'my room'.

We celebrated our arrival with half a litre of water each and 2 pieces of fudge which was declared to be "Delissiousss your wife is genius sir". True.

Almost as soon as we arrived Moin went off to do his 'work'. To get the official certificate of his degree he has to present a letter signed by his Head of Department and the Principal [prof Srinivasulu] to say that he has completed the course. The Head will only sign it in the presence of the student. Twice previously Moin has travelled the 250km from his home to get this letter but the Head has not turned up or told him to come the next day. Today he had agreed to be there in

the afternoon to sign but he did not turn up, leaving Moin to stand around all afternoon. So he returned at about 6.00 feeling frustrated and anxious. We then waited for Sai Gopal [Head of Virology] to arrive at the guest house. At 6.30 his secretary arrived by cycle to say he will be coming in 30 minutes. After 90 minutes he was not here so we went by auto to Sindhuri Park Hotel for dinner. I was pleased that I still enjoy the drive down the road under the huge trees [that I saw planted some years ago] to Balaji Colony, Town Club, and Ghandi Road. We were met at the restaurant by 6 smiling welcoming waiters etc saying how please they are that we are both back with them again. This was our favourite restaurant last year so this was a bit of a celebration. Butter roti and kaju gobi [cashew nuts and cauliflower] followed by butterscotch icecream [of course sir].

Back at the guest house we spent 10 minutes persuading one of the staff what I wanted for breakfast. He is the small dark nervous nice assistant [Lokanardh] who has been given me as his special responsibility. He finds this a bit of a burden I think but it was helped by Moin who told him that I think he is the most helpful person there and that I will be happy whatever he does.

Jan 21st Thursday. Again I had trouble with heat when trying to sleep while Moin wore his jacket and blanket cocoon. We both slept well and woke just in time for breakfast. The dining hall is being renovated so we have to eat in my room which I don't really like. Orders had been obeyed and we had idli and wada with coconut paste and curry with sweet tea. Sai Gopal soon turned up and we had a really nice chat about the department etc. We explained about Moin's problem and he promised to help if needed. This was not necessary as the Head of Department turned up at 10.00, signed the letter and then spent 90 minutes chatting very helpfully, arranging for M to visit Hyderabad to discuss doing projects there with his old mates [but he never did do anything about this]. We drove to the University in SG's car. I was briefly introduced to the 1st years ['Previous Year'] and left to 'interact' for 10 minutes. They seem a nice bright lot with twice as many girls as boys. I then wandered around meeting other staff members and research scholars and final year students. I really do feel very welcome there.

Every year Sai Gopal gets more impressive. He managed to arrange for us to pay our respects to the Registrar, then the Rector, then Vice Chancellor, all within one morning. His status is very high since the national appraisal last year which I helped with. In their report they said that all Departments claim to have International visitors and advisors but that Virology was one of the few who could prove it. It probably helped that the Chairman of the panel had spent time in the Virology Department at Southampton for a lengthy visit. As a result they received an A and 300% increase in funds. The Vice Chancellor was very excited about this – his own department of physics was the only other department getting an A.

My lunch was scaled down from yesterday and I only had twice as much as I needed. Moin's mother had sent me a box of the sweet things that Charu gave us at Christmas and these go very well with curds. Soon after lunch Moin turned up with his good news and off he went to get the bus to Renigunta to catch the train home. I gave my first lecture on industrial microbiology to the final year Microbiology students. As usual they seem to have become more dull since last year but I enjoyed the lecture. Sadly Subramanyam [Subbu] has moved to Zoology as they could offer him a higher stipend; we haven't met yet as he is still at his home, having an extended Pongal holiday. After much argument I rejected the offer of a drive back to the guest house and walked back by way of Biochemistry. I immediately met Dr Reddy who managed a feeble smile as he told me that Thyagaraju was with the students. Some of the final year students remembered me from my one lecture there and visits to the student hostels. They all seem enthusiastic and I guess I will visit for a lecture again. I felt that I had really arrived as I walked back through the campus, now more shaded than last year as they have had good rains and the trees have all grown a lot. I

established my place on my rooftop garden with a cup of tea [actually it was coffee] before Satheesh arrived, very pleased to see me [mutual] and considerably enlarged as a result of thesis writing and no gym. He drove me down to Ghandi Road so that I could wander around the temple area to Sindhuri park for dinner [butter roti and dum alloo]. They had closed the road to cars and autos so it was more peaceful than usual although the motorbikes could go faster and hoot more. This is related to a festival to do with the sun but I cannot think what it is. The shops were very busy so I deferred buying bedsheets etc till later. I did manage to buy an extension cable and a table lamp. The only one they had is a blue and red toucan. It took half an hour to rearrange wiring and table etc so that I can have computer etc sensibly organised. Here ends the first diary writing session.

Jan 22nd Friday. *I am writing in the evening listening to Schumann's 2nd piano trio – the one I played with Zena and Frances.* Today was almost a standard Tirupati day, except for the beginning as I had no walk. Last night I had all the usual disturbances: noisy traffic in frantic bursts with long periods of calm; an irritable and irritating dog; noisy conversations between staff standing in the entrance beneath my window. No problem really as I had plenty of sleep and some nice reading: Asta's Book by Barbara Vine [the crime writer version of Ruth Rendell]. The four generations of characters were a bit confusing so I produced a family tree in the morning. At 8.30 my man turned up with a tray holding a small pot of curry, one vada [like a savoury doughnut] and a newspaper parcel wrapped with fine string containing pongal [nice rice dish]. Sai Gopal turned up in his little car to fetch me. The electronic key makes it yelp like a happy puppy. Had an enjoyable lecture with 1st years – introduction to molecular biology and the genetic code; they were very active, calling out when I said the wrong base pair etc. Then I wandered into biochemistry department to have brief chat with Thyagaraju who asked me to do 2 lectures next week. I will do one on my work and the second on the new Serine pathway. Then walked back the 20 minutes to home and some time on the roof preparing the serine pathway lecture. Gopi phoned to say that he can visit this weekend so I will have no time to prepare then. There is a conference using the guest house for eating, in a sort of marquee in the quad so the air was filled with cooking curry smells. They forgot my lunch and said it would be 30 minutes so I had to pretend anger, pointing out that my lecture started in 30 minutes and they miraculously produced a huge lunch from the conference pots. Much too much to eat in the 8 minutes available.

The afternoon lecture on industrial microbiology was enjoyable, starting with a sweet little girl called Jyothi presenting me with a small bar of cadbury's milk chocolate; I felt like a primary school teacher. Subbu [Subramanyam with the smile and the earring] was waiting for me after the lecture and we arranged to go and eat in the evening. Because I don't teach all the final year students I meet them in ones and twos on the stairs, all making me feel very welcome, including pushy Priya who scolded me for not replying to all her emails. After a walk back in the hot sun I sat on the roof in my shorts and sunhat [wonderful] then sorted pictures for showing students while waiting for Subbu to arrive, driven on the bike of one of the 1st years called Sarath Babu. Down to Sindhuri park again for channa masala and butter roti. As we left the guest house my man [responsible for feeding me] told Subbu that he had to take urgent leave for family reasons and that no one else would take on the task of keeping me alive. We called Sai Gopal and he seems to have sorted something. After coming out of Sindhuri Park we listened to the musicians and recitals by the tank for a short time before calling into the small shirt shop run by the family of Sasi Kumar. They are always so welcoming and immediately phoned Sasi in Hyderabad for me. He is the tall handsome vain boy who wants to be a filmstar or a racing driver. Then down crowded Ghandi road for shopping for 10 coat hangers, one grass broom and three floor mats followed by Gogula stores for my annual bedsheets and lungis and back in an auto with a bad tempered racing driver. I

love Tirupati in the evenings packed with so many happy people strolling about. The average age is about 20 so it contrasts so happily with Southampton where I seem to be the average age. Subbu soon left after phoning his family to tell them about his evening with his famous professor. I celebrated the completion of my home building by soaking hot tired feet in warm bucket before writing this diary. I was interrupted by a sad call from Moin who did not pass the high-powered general postgraduate exam that would let him choose what University he studies for PhD in. It is so crazy as the exam includes maths physics chemistry as well as biology. My phone was running out of minutes and so was his and of course I could think of nothing to comfort him with. "It is ok sir, I will now read *The Greatest Show on Earth* [Dawkins] dedicated to me by the only one who understands and cares". Good ol Dawkins.

It is now 10.30 so I shall have an early night as soon as Schonberg's beautiful Gurrelieder is finished. Missing you all. It always feels good here when I recall that you know what it is like from our nice holiday here Libby.

Jan 23rd Saturday. *I am writing this feeling bloated with my first non-veg dinner since Mahabalipuram.*

Last night was really cool so I woke regularly to listen to the traffic and dogs and occasional train. I have not yet gone for a morning walk and intended to do so this morning. I started coughing as soon as I got up so put on a shirt and returned to bed. My new food provider [Bashar] was brilliant and produced exactly what I had ordered. I don't know what Sai Gopal had said but he was very helpful for whole visit although I found his smiling obsequiousness slightly irritating. My morning lecture on genetic code was enjoyable and I finished with a 20 minute introduction to my research. After my beaker of tea I attacked my email, dispatching at least 30 spam mails and extracting 5 real ones including one from Stu to say that he was calling in on Thursday to make sure Libby and Hugh are eating their vegetables. Because of the food crisis I asked Gopi to come in the afternoon to avoid lunchtime squabbles [what an odd word]. I was brought a perfect lunch – on a plate with rice veg and samba. Then shower & sleep while waiting for Gopi who arrived about 2 hours late. Before he arrived a student from last year came; Subbu had seen him and told him I am here. He is the Christian student who played guitar in the hostel last year. While looking for a job he spends his time playing a church band, going to village churches, luring the villagers to church by their modern music. I asked if he had heard of any persecution of Christians in India and he said this never happens.

Soon after Gopi arrived one of the 1st year students [Sharath Babu] phoned and asked if he could come to the guest house. Five minutes after I said no he arrived so I left Gopi to look at pictures on the laptop while I chatted on the roof. He had been taught at BSc college by an ex-roommate of Subbu who has dutifully adopted him. Subbu then arrived and we eventually decided to go to Fortune Kences for their expensive buffet dinner. This avoided the ridiculous long wait that I had with Libby when I went there. As I mentioned they all ate huge amounts while I had delicious fish followed by chicken and bread and butter pudding and ice cream. The area around that hotel is next to the huge long-distance bus stand and is mainly hotels and eating places. It feels as if everyone is in transit [they probably are] and looking for something [they probably are]. All very noisy and a bit grubby. Gopi got my phone recharged with 500 rupees – enough to last my time and now ok to use to phone home. He is now lying on the bed reading Paul Scott's *The Mark of the Warrior*, provoking him to ask why I don't write one of these story books. That reminds me that Len Zatman always intended writing a novel when he retired but I never heard if he had done so. Gopi showed me some pictures of his work place. He works with Hewlett Packard sorting our customers' problems, most of whom are in Europe. There are 60 others doing similar work and he

has a great group of friends there. He is slightly heavier than before and his face seems even blacker. Because of his work his English is more confident and he is a great pleasure to chat with. At about bed time he moved out on the roof to phone friends and didn't return for at least 2 hours.

Jan 24th Sunday. The temperature last night was only 15 degrees and I was cold, so were the dogs who howled all night but the 4 night staff argued outside my window for a few hours' so had a poor night's sleep. I woke with a headache which stayed all day. Gopi slept through the first few hours of the day and I slept through the afternoon. They brought us excellent breakfast and lunch. Gopi went off at about 5.0 by bus to Chittoor [then on to Bangalore through the night]. I had a nice stroll around NCC nagar towards the hills, on the edge of the campus and then auto down to Kalyan Residency for peaceful dinner. The auto did not know Kalyan so I went to the nearby tank at Sindhuri park where the goddess was being taken for a very noisy ride around the tank, cheered on by many hundreds of devotees. In the Kalyan, Ravi was apologetic for our car problem and he assures me that there will be no problem with our journey home. I was alone in the restaurant except for the usual 5 staff who stand around watching me eat my dum biryani followed by ice cream. When I got to the guest house I found my headache was gone so decided to phone Sarath and tell him he could come. Fortunately I delayed a few minutes and Sunil arrived at the door, shivering but grinning happily. He is the very thin student from last year who was always on his mobile phone with worn out key pads. He is back in Tirupati to try to get a PhD place. Of course he wants advice but I cannot give him useful advice, the system is too mysterious for me. He told me that he hoped that Sai Gopal would give advice and at that minute Sai Gopal and an old friend of his arrived at the door. The friend was a student of the first prof –Naidu and wanted to chat before catching the bus back to Bangalore. I told Sai Gopal that I had just advised Sunil to go to him because he will give the best advice – so I think that will ensure that he will spend some time with him tomorrow. This was not successful as it turns out. *Just off for dinner*
Sunil has just got a job in Bangalore as a food microbiologist. It seems that there are always plenty of jobs for food microbiologists in India. Very sadly we did not meet again.

Jan 25th Monday I slept much better last night as I was able to use both blankets in the coldest part of the night. I set off on a cool sunny morning for my first walk to find that my favourite path for birds has a new Pig breeding shed built across it. I will have to find other places but so much building is going on. I saw a few of the old favourites but not many. After my molbiol lecture I went to biochemistry to confirm my lectures with Murali, the secretary who is the most competent of all the people there. I then found the Zoology Department where Subramanyam is working for his PhD with Prof Rajendra who I introduced myself to. I was then taken to a very nice comfortable staff room to meet a lady prof Yellorama. They told about their research and then invited me to give a lecture next week; as they have a unit on Information technology my title will be Bacterial Quinoproteins and the misuse of information technology [the pqq vitamin story]. I then walked back in very hot sun to a nice simple lunch and a sleep before Sai Gopal dragged me off for industrial microbiology. Another hot walk back to find, as arranged, flute Charlie waiting for me. He was very pleased with his tin whistles and asked if madam has played the flute he gave her last year. Not regularly I told him but she is very pleased with it – it is very beautiful. His brother Kiran now has a permanent job working on a radio station as a recording engineer. Sarath Babu appeared again [he has a nice Hero Honda motorbike so it is easy for him to drop in] to invite me to go to their hostel room in C Block this evening. As soon as Charlie left I set off for a walk in the dairy farm, prepared for further disappointment but all was ok. The threatened new building has not started and there is now a hole in the far wall allowing access to the Thumulagunta road. I saw

a fascinating little bird on the small pond, eventually identifying it as a moorhen. There were no special birds but it was a lovely evening walk, peaceful and perfect. The calm led to the storm of the railway crossing where a train was about to cross; I was then caught up in the race to cross the line first. After a short time writing this diary I felt rested enough to set out for dinner in Sindhuri Park. I had a peaceful read of my book [Barbara Vine's *Astas's Book*] while eating alloo paratha [thin potato-stuffed naan] with Gobi Kaju [cauliflower with cashew nuts], followed by a noisy tired but happy walk down Ghandi road then auto ride to University First Gate to visit C black. I was captured on the way by another of the 1st year microbiologists who led me to room 115 which was 80% taken up with 3 metal sheet beds pushed together in the middle. 8 of the boys then piled onto it waiting for me to entertain them. It was quite a struggle because all of them were taught in Telugu medium BSc colleges and they find my accent difficult. I had taken a map of Andhra with me so I got them to show me their 'native places'. They then wrote their names in my small notebook; this is always popular as it shows that I think of them as real people, perhaps disappointing later when I fail to remember their names. I was driven home by Sarath on his Honda and here I am, feeling very tired. I shall have the luxury of washing my feet in hot water then to bed. I did think of getting my new disciple Sarath to do this but I doubt if he would get the symbolism. Moin just phoned to tell me that his father will be coming to Tirupati especially to meet me. It is about 6 hours both directions. I tried to dissuade him but it seems he may come [*he never did*].

Jan 26th Tuesday; Republic Day. Today was a holiday, celebrating the day in 1950 when the Constitution was signed and India became a republic. I had a good night as I decided to start with 2 blankets. I had a slow start with what has become the standard breakfast of Wada and Idlis. I am getting to like it more, especially when hungry. I finished rinsing clothes and hung them out to dry then tried to set off for Thumulagunta. I was stopped by 4 of the staff who wanted to give me sweets for Republic Day. I thanked them by taking photos of them and letting them play with the binoculars like a load of little boys. By 10 it was getting hot but the slight breeze made it feel a perfect summer's day. It is nice now to be able to walk through the Dairy farm to T. with the gentle devotional songs murmuring from the loudspeakers in the Ashoka trees. I soon had an encounter with a gang of young teenagers and small boys, returning with faces daubed in yellow streaks from some temple function I guess. I took a short video of the boys posing [I later learned that what they were saying was "come on old man / grandpa lets see if you know how to use the camera"]. Loads of photos. As I came into the road in T. where Balaji lives I had a lovely welcome from one of the little girls "Uncle uncle you are so so nice uncle you come on Republic day to us". Then the boys saw me and came hurtling up demanding photos as usual. Venkatarama soon saw me and led me down to Balaji's where his nice mum made tea and asked how is my beautiful wife. I then invented appropriate messages from Libby, to her grinning delight. The boy who was leaving for Chandragiri last year soon came up to tell me he is nearly 18 yrs and is in the Chandragiri Engineering College. He still only looks big enough to be 14 but is very vain, posing for photos and driving others away who want to join him. He then begged dollars or gold coin! Balaji now has a job, entering computer data in a local firm so he is very happy that he can continue to live at home – as he is an only son. He only earns 5000 rupees/month but that is enough. Somehow he has acquired a new Hero Honda bike that he drove me home on.

I was soon on the roof reading the paper in my hat and shorts only to be disturbed by Sai Gopal – "come sir you must dress, Chowdappa and all his family are coming". They had been to the hill Temple at Tirumula and were coming to the second god of the day for darshan. I reluctantly came in and changed. SG then disappeared and they all arrived 40 minutes later. A bit irritating. Chowdappa has a very smart large new car and his son, now 21 years old drove us safely

down to Sindhuri Park for lunch; South Indian thali. Chowdappa wants his son to come to UK to do an MSc in Engineering so I will have to do some research when I get back. I told him that it was very expensive and he shrugged - no problem no problem. He will return the week after next to bring me grapes. After a short sleep I started to prepare my two lectures to Biochemistry Department for tomorrow and the day after. Moin's father is coming tomorrow and I am going to dinner with Charlie in the evening so I had to finish preparation of both power point presentations tonight. I have just finished [10.30] so had no time to go to dinner. I have stocked up with shortcake, chocolate and bananas. I was interrupted by the arrival of two shivering students; Sarath and another 1st year who was snivelling and sneezing. They came on Sarath's bike so were freezing. They insisted on taking off shoes of course but they had stinking socks. I sent them off after 10 minutes of showing pictures but then had to put the fan full on with the door open to get rid of the stench. I am hoping to get to sleep early now but some pompous noisy guest is shouting in arguments down the corridor so it may not be so easy. Goodnight all

Jan 27th Wednesday As the shouting guests down the corridor were still at it near midnight I went down in my boxers and vest to investigate. They had the door open and there were about 6 of them with one man standing and shouting. I asked if they could shut the door and someone slammed it closed banging my head. It opened immediately and the shouter stepped out and bellowed at me so I beat a retreat with him still shouting. I nervously bolted my door but in about 5 minutes all was quiet. I think it was one drunk and others behaving well. Anyway I slept well with 2 blankets. I woke early thinking about my big lecture in Biochemistry. I read through that instead of a walk then had my civilised breakfast of idlis and wada and a huge glass of tea. After my molecular biology lecture on protein synthesis I went straight to Biochemistry to their large clean lecture theatre. I found I could not get my computer to link to the projector so moved to plan B – using my memory stick with their computer. It immediately found a virus so had to clean it up. Eventually we started 15 minutes late. At my request the staff all left so I had only the students, which is preferable as they can respond easily. They liked the pictures of the snow and the pictures of Tirupati in 1982. And they seemed to like the lecture, and promised to come to the one tomorrow.

I am writing this in the evening with the ceiling fan doing its stuff, the bells of the elephants going home to bed and Britten's Billy Budd [sea shanty] competing. That reminds me of when we first heard it at Covent Garden under Georg Solti.

I begged a bike lift back with a show off research assistant making a nerve-wracking trip, returning just in time for my carrots, dahl, rice and curds, all on a nice china plate. They have got it just right now. I had a sleep after lunch and woke suddenly at 1.45 so leapt up and dressed, rushing to get ready for Sai Gopal and then the wretched man did not come until 2.20 to take me to my 2.00 lecture. It was about 33 deg in the lecture theatre with fans blasting through my lecture on butanol fermentation and I did not cool down until I got back from my walk to the guest house. I had not waited for tea as there was no one there. Sai Gopal phoned to protest of course. Moin had phoned earlier to say that his father's visit is postponed as he has some unexpected business. Suri brought me a big glass of tea out on the roof, reading a book, Forgotten Wars, about South East Asia after the Japanese surrender. I did not know the war went on for another 2 years. After a delicious bucket shower and a dry out in the setting sun I set out to go to Charlie's beyond Girpuram past the Lutheran church. He could not collect me so I grabbed an auto as it delivered a family to the guest house. I phoned Charlie so he could explain to the driver how to get there. Successful trick. When nearly there the cheerful young driver got lost so phoned again. Negotiating the narrow crowded streets with one hand holding the phone. They have moved to a new house, rather one floor of a 3 floor house. It is quiet with beautiful cool marble floors.

Charlie's music is going successfully with enough work. He has made one small room as a music room with key board and huge loudspeakers and soundproof door. He has good internet access so I tried to access my email. I succeeded but found that they were arranged alphabetically so I couldn't do much. Their children are good fun; an 8 yr old precocious girl Teenia and a small 13 yr old boy, Stephen. We had a perfect dinner of chicken with cashew nuts [Indian style], chapatti, rice and coca cola which was wonderful. Stephen had something strange on his steel plate; it turned out to be a heap of green fluorescent jam out of a jam jar which he kneaded with his fingers popping little gobbets into his mouth between bites of chapatti. His main interest is music and dancing so I now have a 4 minute film of him dancing to film music. He is extremely thin and looked like a little stick puppet twitching and whirling about. We drove back on Charlie's old motorbike with Teenia on the tank. He drives slowly and safely but I still feel very vulnerable, manoeuvring amongst the relaxed crowds and bikes and autos and cows. I love this evening atmosphere.

Jan 28th Thursday. After sleeping well I woke at 7.15 and got up immediately to put finishing touches to my second Biochemistry Dept lecture – on the work the Freiburg group did to solve the serine pathway. Satheesh came to collect me for my usual molecular biology lecture so I was able to start on time. The temperature is higher today and there was a power cut so no fans in my lecture. Fifteen minutes after my lecture I was in Biochemistry for their special lecture. Still no electricity but they had a special emergency supply for their lecture theatre. It was gratifying that all the students came to this second lecture. Again the part they seemed to like best was the set of old pics [different from yesterday] and especially the pics of the academic staff. At the end they seemed reluctant to go so I waved goodbye to leave only to be ushered back in by all the staff who arrived with presents etc. So I had what is usually a farewell experience; little speeches by staff, garland of jasmine and roses, a large soft wool shawl, an envelope containing 1000 rupess [£15] and yet another wooden framed picture of Sri Venkateshwara made with marquetry, heavy but nicer than usual. Thyagaraju, the small black Head of Department thanked me especially for being able to make the audience laugh in a scientific lecture; luckily they had done so – he was not there. Fortunately I had taken my camera so was able to make it a special occasion with photos all round. It always seems appreciated that I want their pictures. Of course with the growth of cellphones with cameras, I often am attacked by them waving in my face. I was more or less forced to agree to visit the biochemistry hostel in the evening in order to escape, which I did when I saw one of the students from last year who had a bike to get me back safely.

After my usual nice lunch I collapsed on the bed and slept soundly until Satheesh woke me for my 2.0 lecture on industrial production of butanol and isopropanol, after which he drove me back to the guesthouse. It is very hot but with some cloud for occasional relief and a gusty strong breeze. After an hour on the roof reading in my shorts and hat I set off for an evening walk out past the dairy technology college to one of my favourite areas in the rough forest beneath the glowing red hills. There seem to be fewer birds than usual but I did see the kingfishers in their usual tree and the greater pied wagtail, bee eaters, drongos, doves etc. Balaji in Thumulagunta yesterday told me there are fewer birds cos so many trees have gone, making way for houses. While standing amongst the low thorny bushes fumbling with my camera a large spotted deer with two tiny ones [cubs, calves, foals, deerlets?] strolled past, only nervously trotting away when a small boy goat herd shouted to his goats who then took over my patch. He had a long stick for his trade with a small black plastic bag and 2 litre water bottle tied on. He was very happy for me to take pictures of his goats and even more so when I included him. I came across him later with his goats and parents or grandparents who were cutting low branches of neem trees. They tied these into big green bundles and carried them on their heads. When we reached the road the old

lady got the boy to ask me to take her photo which I then had to show her by poking the camera under her bundle which was hiding her face. This was rewarded with a magnificent witchly cackle.

I got back at sunset and lay down after a delicious warm footwash to listen to the last 20 minutes of Billy Budd before catching an auto for dinner in Sindhuri Park. Paneer Mughalali was lovely. I ordered Kashmir naan, expecting the English version which is just slightly sweet stuffed naan. But it was more like a thin pizza covered in red jam with sweet berries, pomegranate seeds, nuts and bits of other fruits. So I ate it separately after the paneer. Laden down with 2 bottles of mineral water I walked all the way back through the temple area, Ghandi road, Prakasam road and Balaji colony to the hostels which took about 50 minutes. A welcoming committee was waiting on the seats under the trees outside and led me by the hand up to room 79 where I had to entertain 8 of them for an hour. This lot were all educated in English so it was not such a struggle as with the virologists. One of the boys is a good dancer [Edwin] but he hurt his leg by dropping acetic acid on it last week so he said I must wait a few days before I see him perform. He is rather sweet, being very thin with slightly goofy teeth and spectacles. I asked if he also sings and he said only in church. He goes to the one where I first met Kiran. There is hardly room in their cell for more than the 3 metal sheet beds. They wanted me to stay the night there – “It is so peaceful and comfortable here; it will be good for you”. One look at the metal bed, the large open barred window and the clanking ceiling fan made the refusal easily unambiguous. While with them I received a missed call from Moin which amused them and led to them taking my phone number so they can send me missed calls. After another photoshoot I was driven home by bike by one of the local students who had been called in to the hostel to meet Sir.

It is now 11.30, listening to Fritz Wunderlich in Mozart's Abduction from the Seraglio, accompanied by howling dogs. And so to bed

Jan 29th Friday. *I am writing this in the evening listening to Palestrina and sucking a travel sweet, feeling slightly bloated from eating too much.*

It was cloudy when I got up at about 7.10 which was enough to excuse a walk and I used the time well preparing a couple of lectures ahead of myself. I was able to start my lecture at 9.30 as Sai Gopal was on time to pick me up on his electric bike. It is exactly the same as a scooter but works from a battery. It needs charging every 3 days. It has no gears [automatic] and is completely silent but only goes slowly and struggles up hills. He bought it for his daughter but she won't use it as she feels stupid going slower than everyone else. Moin has sent his CV [my biodata sir] to me by email for me to edit but of course today had to be the day that the power supply to the server broke. I remembered that I have to prepare a special lecture for the Zoology Department on Monday then realised I cannot remember the title or the time. So went and had nice chat with Prof Ravendra and got it sorted. He took me to see one of the labs where he introduced me to a bunch of first years who seem very bright and enthusiastic. He told them I would be giving a lecture on Monday. When I asked if they would be attending I got a chorus of Yes sir of course sir, you are now famous on this campus [What is it I like about this place I wonder?]. Having rejected a lift back I realised it was lunch time so had a brisk walk back at 30 degrees in midday sun for my now standard good lunch, always finishing with a bowl of curds with 3 pieces of milk chocolate. As usual I had to be woken by Satheesh to go to my afternoon lecture on Citric acid production; this lecture period requires a large input of will to sound interested when I would prefer to be sleeping. Satheesh drove me back and continued my sleep for 20 minutes before moving into the sun to master a bit more of my camera. I found that it does have exactly what I have wished. There is one dial position that gives Custom settings. If selected it goes immediately to the film speed etc for bird pictures, at full zoom with spot focus and exposure. After downloading my more recent pictures onto the computer I realised that I didn't have energy for another hot walk so I set

off to explore the small roads between the guest house and the women's university. A great discovery. It is all built up with widely separated houses almost buried in a great number and diversity of trees, including huge banyan trees with roots hanging down from the lower branches, Neem trees, mango, tall palms and even clumps of very tall bamboo. I actually saw some birds at last including tree pies, orioles, Shikra hawk, little minivets, koils and coppersmiths.

The first year student Sarath Babu phoned and asked if he could come to guest house and I thought I arranged for him to pick me up to go for dinner at 7. Just before 7 Subbu phoned to ask if I have forgotten him as I had not visited him in his lab in Zoology when I was there this morning. We arranged to meet tomorrow evening. As Sharath had not arrived I set out to walk to town for dinner, leaving a note for him on the door. After 5 minutes walk he drove up beside me just as I had grabbed an auto. He did not want to come to dinner [shy] so I had to agree to call in to hostel on my way home. After 3 minutes drive we were stopped by police and ordered to park on the opposite side of road along with other autos and bikes. This was a practice security operation in preparation for a visit from the state Chief Minister tomorrow. I wanted to give up and walk but fortunately my driver got me to wait and we set off again in 5 minutes. His auto had the old fashioned rubber duck squawk horn and we had a gentle ride down to Ghandi road. I walked from there to Sindhuri Park again, to have naan and paneer irani which was excellent but too big so I am still feeling bloated. After walking past the shelves of sleeping beggars by the temple tank I got an auto back to First gate to do my duty to see Sharath, an easy duty as he has the motorbike and would drive me home. Before I got to his room I was captured by some biochemists who assumed I was visiting them. I hadn't the energy to entertain them all again so we chatted for 10 minutes while they took mobile phone photos before liberating me for a gentle drive through the campus to home. I really had little interest in leaving my room this evening to go to dinner, feeling listless and dozy. This was cured as soon as we reached the relaxed warm summer evening atmosphere of Balaji colony. Just had a call from Madhu, feeling sorry for himself that he is not here in India; I told him that I missed him coming to visit me in the guest house and he replied that I was "god's gift to him"! just fell asleep while writing this on my armchair. Must stop goodnight.

Jan 30th Saturday. I woke suddenly at 2.30am in a nightmare; I was at an airport and the plane was about to leave and my passport had disappeared. I seemed to be running through treacle getting nowhere. I woke feeling extremely stiff but peacefully relieved that it was all a dream and I was soon asleep again. It was another gray dawn but it soon became brighter and I had a visit on the top of my garden Ashoka tree of a Shikra hawk. Masala dosa for breakfast. After my lecture on transcription I wrestled for 2 hours with the internet which was available but it kept losing its connection. Had a nice long welcome newsy email from Libby and a really nice chatty one from John Guest who I am determined to visit in the spring. As always happens when I am here I have a request to referee a paper from Microbiology [Dan Arp]. Usually it seems to be from Mary's lab but this time it was from Julia Vorholt who I visited in Zurich last year. It is based on a project by a nice girl I met there, and with whom I spent a lot of time advising on this project. I had no lecture in the afternoon so spent the whole time preparing my Zoology Department lecture. I couldn't go on the roof garden as they had a sort of marquee there to serve food to 3 bus loads of conference delegates. It was fairly cloudy and I was a bit dozy so went for quiet stroll in Dairy farm only to be stopped by a security guard at the gate. Usually they wave or salute but this time a grim guard called me over to ask where I was going. When I said for a walk in the Dairy farm he shouted No photos. I told him it was only birds so he said Only for 30 minutes - then proceeded to march down the long drive, me sheepishly trotting to keep up, to the little temple of Krishna at the end, which he pointed out to me. Fortunately our old friend Chowpatta [or Kopatta – senior manager] appeared, running with arms outstretched and grinning. After a big hug he waved the security

man away, explaining I should not worry about him as he is new. I went across briefly to see the elephants but find them a bit sad, chained by very short chain to the floor, wagging their heads in rolling sort of rhythm that signifies pathological boredom. The atmosphere in the fields was very relaxing as there was a strong cooling breeze. Saw Coucal, drongo, mynah, babblers, a flock of yellow wagtails and at last after about 3 years a small group of Ashy swallow-shrikes – one of the first birds I identified in 1982. I was just thinking that I hadn't seen any rollers and immediately I saw four; Sai Gopal later told me it is the state bird of Andhra Pradesh. Also bee-eaters, tailor bird, munia, dabchicks, paddy birds and kingfishers. I got back at 6.0, Subramanyam appeared at exactly 6.30 to show appreciation for his nice watch [a gift from me; £7 from amazon], and off we went to the Kalyan where we were both presented with calendars of the hotel. We got an auto and returned to guest house direct, both feeling tired. Subbu finished explaining his project and left 30 minutes ago. Tomorrow is Sunday and I have no plans except to go to Charlie's again in the evening. I feel envious of Libby and Hugh going off on the brother tour. I am feeling horribly twitchy but it is too early to sleep so I may try to watch a film. Gnight.

Jan 31st Sunday. I watched [and slept through] Waltz with Bashir a sort of serious cartoon about Iraq. A mistake as it had subtitles and I slept and I got a stiff neck. Had a bad night, waking stiff 4 or 5 times. I gave up at seven then drifted about with stiff headache and feeling sorry for myself. Cured completely by going for a walk in the rising sun up towards my old favourite walk through the horse area to the pigs. All the way up the long drive there were pictures of the state Chief Minister on every lamp post and tree. I found out why when a small car stopped and a man came running up to ask me if I was a guest. He was the director of the Dairy Technology Institute whose new building I had seen a few days ago. The CM is coming to inaugurate it and the kind Director thought I was a lost wandering guest. It turned out to be a lucky morning with trees full of birds: orioles, bulbuls, magpie robins, tailor birds, parakeets, mynahs, Koils, Shikra, Coppersmiths. Best of all I got a great picture of a female Koil with her fierce hawk-like beak and glowing red eye. All this was in gentle sunny morning with a cool breeze. I eventually found a way around the new pig house that had blocked my paths. As I reached the rough scrub area I realised that it was 9.00 so I was missing breakfast; the same second I had a call from Sai Gopal "hello sir where are you, what are you doing, the guest house staff are all looking for you because they have sent for breakfast for you". No problem – they didn't mind that I had missed breakfast. They kept it so I had cold idlis and curry; no problem as I was so hungry. After such a nice start to the day it was annoying to get my headache back. I ignored it then later had 3 aspirins and it went as I started to organise my photos. A bit later Sai Gopal turned up for a nice social chat, cancelling the rather silly message about staff hunting for me. He has organised someone to get me a 30 litre drum [with tap] of drinking water [it never materialised]. *The elephants are going home to bed with their bed time bells.* Lunch arrived promptly at 12.30; rice curried veg, dahl and a tumbler of curds to be eaten with milk chocolate. After my usual post-prandial sleep I spent an hour finishing my Zoo Department lecture, then half an hour reading on the roof followed by a lovely evening stroll around the local houses. This time I found myself on the railway embankment so walked along towards town as far as the small crossing near the Women's University. Nice Sunday evening atmosphere. After a shower I had to soon set off to dinner at Charlie's, starting with a long walk past the University to get an auto. Charlie phoned directions to the driver who finished the last part of the journey driving with one hand as he listened to final instructions from Charlie. I had made a CD of Stevens dance which looks fantastic even blown up to 21inch screen size. Father and mother then came in for re-union. Both look well but the little shop [Fruity Corner] had to be closed as his back is bad. During dinner of chicken and cashew nuts with puris he told me long complicated jokes which I almost understood. I was very appreciative of course. The worst part of

the visit, as before, is the trip back. This time it was on his landlord's scooter with little daughter standing up in front of him so he had to peer around her. He warned me as we set off that he was not good at balancing the scooter. Yet again we survived.

Feb 1st Monday. *I am writing this exhausted at 11.15 at the end of a happy day.* After a relatively undisturbed night I woke to another gray dawn. The sun does not fight off the morning light cloud and mist until about 8.00. I had to copy my special Zoology Department lecture onto CD and to go through it thoroughly as it was a bit different from others. After Pongal for breakfast I was collected by SG on his E-bike, his electric scooter, for a silent slow gentle ride to the Department. All the students were there at 9.30 so I was able to give a full hour lecture, on transcription, introns and exons. I then drifted down in the rapidly heating day to zoology department for my special lecture preceded by the usual sitting around chatting to staff.

They seemed to enjoy the lecture in which I covered in detail all the bad science using IT and databases in wrongly concluding that pqq is a vitamin. I also included more old pics of Tirupati and some bird pictures. With interruptions and questions it went on for 90 minutes. No one offered me a lift back to the guest house so I joined the dogs in a brisk walk in the midday sun back for a late lunch. No sooner had I prepared the afternoon lecture than Satheesh arrived for a 20 minute chat about his thesis. The lecture theatre was very hot even with fans blasting and doors open but again there was a full house for my full one hour lecture on lysine biosynthesis. After a 20 minute break I gave a seminar to 5 post grads on how to prepare and write a research paper and a review. This went on for nearly 2 hours, finishing only when my voice gave up. Again no one offered me a lift back so I walked in the cool breeze in the setting sun at 5.30 through the campus. Two students stopped to offer me a lift but I thought that if I accepted I would arrive at the guest house only to walk out again to make the best of the evening light so I continued on my way. As I passed the canteen there was a great shout from the roof which had been occupied by the Biochemistry students who invited me up for tea. Very welcome and they are some of the nicest students, their English being good so able to have relaxed conversation. I arrived home very tired so slumped down and indulged in the luxury of a phone call to Hugh, driving home from the three brothers tour which had been done in a blizzard. So so nice to hear it had all gone well and very happy that Libby has Hugh for company. As soon as I finished my call Sarath appeared, cool and smiling. As he has a bike it is a bit too easy for him to drop in. His English is not good so he quite hard work. I did not fancy a nerve-wracking ride through town with him so I sent him off and set out for town. Expecting to get an auto. None came so I sulked and walked all the way through town to Sindhuri park for stuffed naan and paneer kofta. After my morning lectures I had promised to call to visit the students in hostel so I forced myself to tell the auto in Netaji road to go to the SVU first gate. Two botany students picked me up and bombarded me with questions all the way to C block where I shared a cell with 12 Zoo students who spoke little clear English, plus one of the nicest Virology students who bumped into us as we came in and he came out of wash room in his singlet shorts and tooth brush. After an hour of the usual question/answer session I terminated the visit with a few photos and then tried to escape to walk home. I was escorted down to the road where 3 students including my nice virologist, grabbed an auto for a 15 rupee drive home. We were met there by two more students including Sarath and the whole lot piled into my room for yet more exhausting chat and looking at computer. Steven dancing and me playing cello with Richard Godfrey. More photos signalled that they should leave which they did with declarations of undying gratitude. I have made it to the end of today's diary entry without falling asleep. I think 6 hours of lectures/seminars is a good excuse to feel exhausted especially when coupled to about 10 km of walking. Goodnight all.

Feb 2nd Tuesday. There was no mist this morning so I set off by 7.30 for a walk; it was still cool enough to wear a vest and shirt. I repeated my very satisfactory walk from the other day, up by the horse stables towards the pig research area. This time there were few birds except for magpie robins

with their songs which are like small snippets of blackbird's. As it got warmer more birds appeared and I found myself struggling through thorn bushes following a strange bird song. I failed to see it and soon realised I was lost. Following a goat track I stumbled through some low bushes to find myself in the garden/yard of one of the NCC houses, startling a man in a lungi crouched over an open fire, making his morning tea I guess. I apologised and he directed me round the side of the house onto a well known small road, getting me back to the guest house in time for my idlis and wada. I am getting to like this tiffen. The lac operon filled my first lecture after which I walked back through a rapidly heating campus to sit in my hat and shorts in the sun on the roof trying to correct the mess that is Satheesh's thesis while drinking a big tumbler of sweet tea. My afternoon lecture to final year students was the first of three on continuous culture which I enjoy. Sai Gopal gave me a lift back to find Moin had just arrived from his home town for a few days visit here. It is a tiring 6 hour train journey. My food man bought us tea on the roof and I gave him a bar of Cadbury's Dairy milk to keep him sweet. He is really efficient and helpful. At 5.30 I took Moin for my new local walk, showing him orioles, bulbuls, babblers and a coucal flashing his chestnut wings at us as he escaped before I could get a good picture. Moin's mother had sent him with a big bowl of lamb biryani so we did not need to go for dinner. We went down to Ghandi road to buy a new cell phone for Moin [Nokia; about £30]. The battery of his previous phone only lasts one hour after a 3 hour charging. Then back to excellent biryani and bananas. He is now sitting cross legged on the bed reading Stryer' Biochemistry while I write this. I am feeling horribly twitchy and I am bit concerned that I might let the computer slide off my lap if I fall asleep. It is only 9.45 but I may go to bed.

Feb 3rd Wednesday. Having gone to sleep before 11.00 I woke at 4.30 and finished reading my excellent book. It was one from the 2nd hand bookshop destined to be left here but it is so good I am sure Libby will like it: Asta's Book by Barbara Vine [aka Ruth Rendell].

I am writing this in the evening listening to Pavarotti and Sutherland singing Donizetti while Moin continues his Biochemistry revision for an exam next week in Bangalore.

Although the morning started sunny I refrained from my morning walk so that I could prepare rather difficult lectures on gene regulation and later on continuous culture. Vada and Idlis for 2 for breakfast. It now gets quite hot by the start of my lecture so I have to battle against the noisy fans. The cool breeze made perfect summer weather. I got into a nice rhythm: I wrote something complicated on the board then stepped out of the open door into the open balcony corridor. Compared with anywhere else in Tirupati the campus is so peaceful. Back at the guest house I topped up my vitamin D while correcting Satheesh's PhD thesis draft on the roof. He drove me to my afternoon lecture to Microbiology students which was ok but too hot. I wanted to get back immediately after but Sai Gopal had invited a Prof from the Agricultural University to come and chat. He was late but no problem; in order to escape I agreed to give a lecture there next week. I will have to prepare a different sort of lecture, probably on methylotrophs generally with a bit of my special stuff later. Satheesh drove me back in time for a nice large glass of tea. I persuaded Moin to walk with me around the dairy farm where we saw them painting the faces of the elephants. I then tried to teach him some of the more common birds. We had nice showings of mynahs, Ashy swallow shrikes, bee eaters, huge flocks of swallows, paddy birds, drongos, babblers and the state bird of Andhra Pradesh, the roller. It was a perfect summer evening with the sun reddening the hills and the breeze rattling the palm trees. Moin was keen to compete in bird photography with his new phone/camera chasing the peacocks around their cage [he was outside]. We hit the rail crossing at the time of the evening local train [6.00] so we followed the small road from the entrance of the dairy farm to the path over the rail track that the local school girls use, and came out next to the guest house. After an hour to recover during which I introduced Moin to Western opera we went by auto to Sindhuri Park and stuffed ourselves with gopi Manchurian, potato stuffed Paratha and some special paneer curry. It is only ten but I feel twitchy so will stop. Goodnight.

February 4th Thursday. I think it must have turned warmer last night as I did not use the blanket – only a large lungi plus a bedsheet. Moin got up very early so I was woken by the sound of floods as he did the Indian trick of self drowning to start the day. I went out for a bird walk in lovely morning sun. Birds were everywhere. In one place there was a small tree filled with red whiskered bulbuls mixed with 2 or 3 small orange- brown birds which gave me some good pictures but I cannot identify them. I have a previous picture in which I suggest they are wren babblers but the book is not convincing. [Later identified as rufous-bellied babblers]. I got back at exactly 8.45 as breakfast of pongal was produced as requested. My nice morning lecture on tryptophan operon was enjoyable and I got a lift back immediately with Satheesh so I could help Moin with his plan to get a project in the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore. I phoned the Head of Microbiology and he suggested I write an email and Moin should do same with his CV etc. He said he will arrange to meet and will probably be able to offer him a project for a few months so that he can evaluate him. Good news. We wrote all the necessary stuff in the late afternoon and sent it from a small excellent internet café in Balaji colony. The total cost of 30 minutes online plus 3 printed pages was only 13 rupees [20p]. Had same lunch as every day – rice and dahl and one veg. It is good for the first mouthfuls when I am hungry but I get actively bored very soon so give up. I made a deal with final year students who are often late for the afternoon lecture. I will start 10 minutes later exactly on time and will start with the attendance register. I told them if they were late for that then I would revert to 2.00. They were very amused and delighted. I think they have a genuine problem with the mess not being efficient. They differ from other final year students in being lively and a pleasure to teach. The girls of course are always lively. After the lecture I washed piles of shorts and shirts then did more preparation of Moin's CV and I wrote a letter to the Bangalore Professor, then off for a long walk towards the SV Veterinary University, meeting some of their students, all with the usual questions about working or studying in UK. I saw almost no birds but did manage to get hot and tired. I did at last see a woodpecker but by then it was too dark for a photo. Hot, tired and dusty I had a bucket shower on my return then finalised the stuff to send to Bangalore. We didn't finish until 8.00 and went immediately to Balaji colony for sending, then to Sindhuri Park for excellent Butter naan with paneer masala. *Now feeling very tired; Moin is still reading molecular biology to the tune of Palestrina.*

February 5th Friday. *I am writing in the evening with Moin interrupting every few minutes to ask molecular biology questions and questions like "why is there a long time between discoveries and the award of the Nobel Prize". He returns to Tadipatri near Annantapur at 6.00 tomorrow morning and is trying to ask all the questions he has forgotten to ask during the last few days. It must be nearly 10.0 as the traffic is quiet and I can hear the bells of the temple elephants going home to bed.*

I was woken by Moin's bathing – water pouring and splashing at about 6.30 so slowly got up myself and went off at 7.15 to my usual bird walk. The first bird I saw was a black headed oriole but I was too slow to set up the camera, but very beautiful. When I arrived at the place where I saw the red whiskered bulbuls yesterday they were still nearby, and also the small orange bird that I have still failed to identify. AND there was a red-eyed female Koil sitting on the bush that was attracting the others, eating berries. I very slowly walked very close and filled the whole of the photo frame with her. The trees were filled with koils, orioles, bulbuls, magpie robins, bee eaters, black drongos, babblers and coppersmiths, with martins and swifts wheeling overhead, all celebrating the warming sun after a cool night. I spent most of the time standing still so had to soon walk back for my breakfast of idli wadas. On the way to my lecture in Sai Gopal's little Suzuki car I found he had no idea how seat belts work, thinking that they would not help much because they do not hold firmly when he pushes against them. "O you are my great car guru sir" when I demonstrated what they do. I finished the arabinose operon and catabolite repression and had time to finish with stuff on our work on cytochromes. Looking at my email I read the tragic news that our TV has broken. I was then taken to meet the Principal of the Science College, a statistician who had to be dragged out of a meeting with the rebelling students union. We quickly escaped but I was

not let off as I was then taken to meet the senior professor on campus, a really nice old man who was sitting beside an esr machine; he leapt up in delight when I recognised what it is, grubbed around the papers on his desk to find an esr spectrum of a grain of sea shell that showed that it contains 3ppm of manganese. I was at last driven back to the guest house to sit in the sun on the roof struggling with Julia's paper on a sort of methanol dehydrogenase.

After the usual boring lunch I slept after reading a few pages of my new book – Barbara Trapido's Frankie and Stankie. My strategy with the final year students worked. They were all waiting for me at 2.10. They all stood up as usual as I walked in and then the boys all imitated me, fluttering their hands and muttering kurchoni to indicate they should sit down. Had a really nice final lecture on the uses of continuous culture. They are a nice gang compared with last years final microbiology boys who often seemed to resent being there. Satheesh drove me back in the hottest part of the day to sit on the roof again for an hour making comments on his draft PhD thesis. At 4.50 we went for a stroll around the lanes near the guest house, between the railtrack and Women's University. There are many types of very high trees there, especially Neem trees whose leaf patterns, rather like a willow but often more radially arranged, look like my pictures of methanol dehydrogenase, part because of the shapes and partly because the colour is the same green. We saw golden orioles mynas babblers koils and crows and many beautiful trees. After another couple of hours work, Moin on molecular biology and me preparing stuff for my lecture next week at the Agricultural University, we got an auto all the way to Fortune Kences hotel for non-veg buffet dinner. It is too expensive and we think it was the same as we had last week but with most of the prawns removed from the prawn curry. *Now listening to Beethoven string quartets. It seems that iTunes scrambles the movements.* Bedtime. Goodnight dear family.

February 6th Saturday.

Slept well but woken early by poor Moin who had to get up at 5.00 to get his 6.00 train to his home. I then slept till 8.00, getting up to prepare a lecture on Lambda phage regulation and to have my masala dosa. Nice lecture. The internet was dead so I had a sunny walk back to guest house by way of the small tea shack where I bought some biscuits and water. Sathheesh was due to come to discuss his thesis in the afternoon so I did another hour on that in the sun on the roof. After my standard lunch I slept for nearly an hour, woken by Satheesh to go through his thesis. It is not good but that meant I could be very useful. We got through it all in 2 solid hours. I was tired of my own voice by the end and I guess he was also. Gopi had said he would come after having lunch in Chittoor so I sat and read on the roof waiting for him. He phoned to say he will be here at 7.00 so at 5.30 I set out for a gentle walk up by NCC Nagar and across to the SVVet University where I watched some cricket and handball. As it became nearly dark I remembered why I do not stay out that late, although it is very pleasant atmosphere; I killed a mosquito just in time. For the first time I opened Photoshop and started to deal with my bird photos, some of which are really good. It is now 8.28 and I am still waiting. Gopi had work to do in Chittoor and it seems to have extended somewhat. He has rung every couple of hours to update me. His last call was to tell me to go and have my dinner and he would eat and get here by 9.00. I could not face another drive down to Sindhuri Park so have just had my dinner of banana, walkers shortbread, fudge and milk chocolate, while listening to Shostakovich's 13th Symphony. A bit earlier I phoned home and had a nice chat with Libby and Hugh who has discovered that the TV is not worth repairing; he is setting out to do the research to buy a replacement. Gopi finally arrived with his happy smile in a very dark face. He is so nice and relaxing to be with. His English has also improved so we can chat about anything. Which we did until late then good night's sleep.

February 7th Sunday. *I am writing at 11.00 so will make it brief.* I woke at usual time but did not want to go out. Gopi slept and slept. When I went to check about tiffen and there was big confusion because it is some kind of general holiday and many of the staff are going to their village. My tiffen was already collected so I left Gopi to sleep while I had my pongal. Later I tried to arrange lunch

and this seemed to be threatening a fight between Basha and Sury. Basha decided he must come and wake Gopi which was remarkable difficult. It was all sorted that Sury would get lunch and I paid him. Tomorrow I have to make new arrangements as Basha is going home for 10 days. Gopi didn't care about breakfast so we chatted for some time and then watched No Country for Old Men which is as good as they said but difficult to hear their southern accents, especially for Gopi. He left soon after lunch, leaving me to sleep and read on roof before setting out to walk beyond Thumulagunta and Upparapalle and the bypass road. I cheated and got an auto to the road to Upparapalle where a boy came running up; he was one of last years small boys but a foot taller. He then rushed off to get his friend, also much taller, who was the one who climbed the telegraph pole last year. When the number has increased sufficiently they earned a nice group photo and I was allowed to continue. I had left at about 4.30 but it was bearable because there was a fine cloud over the sun some of the time. This walks takes me out beyond the bypass to the more rural part with paddy fields and corn. A lovely walk. On the way back I was shouted over by a cowherd and his friend; the usual mix of teenagers with their usual questions. But they always make me feel at home and welcome wandering over the fields. I soon was lucky enough to get an auto who I planned to direct over the small level crossing near the Women's university. Being almost 6.00 it was already closed so I got him to drive up the small road parallel with the rail track, stopping where I could cross the track direct to the guest house. After feet washing and an hour sleep I autoed down to Sindhuri park, and walked back down a relatively traffic free Ghandi road where I met the director of the Agric college where I give a lecture on Wednesday. This was fortunate as I had forgotten the title. It was early to return home so I autoed to first gate and then C block to see the biochemists. But I was caught by a first year virology student who said they were planning to come and visit me. Amongst all the students milling around me in the entrance I recognised one of the biochemists I most wanted to see (Edwin Satheesh) and arranged that he would come tomorrow evening. I then walked back with 2 virologists; one I wanted to chat with (Bala Ankaiah) plus his more aggressive friend. After showing loads of pictures they have just left. I must sleep. Goodnight.

February 8th Monday. I slept well, the definition of this being that I only woke about 5 times. This happens after trains and there is one quiet centre of the night when the dogs howl and bark. Anyway I woke to a gray morning at 7.30. Although it is good to have Gopi or Moin here I do love to wake up alone. As the first morning lecture is on lambda phage which is difficult, and my feet were still not quite recovered from yesterday, I had no walk. Almost all staff have gone to their villages so there was no one to get me tiffen until I saw Sury and he took 50 rupees and went off for Idli Wada. After the lecture I got on the net to get some stuff for my Wednesday lecture at the Agriculture College. I then collected Subbaiah and we autoed back to guest house to discuss his research projects. He is the small student whose smile, moustache and huge eyelashes make him look like Charlie Chaplin, and who became a sort of mascot last year. His English is much improved and his work was quite impressive. I risked offering to read his draft reports in order to get him to leave. There was no lunch planned as no staff to get and no one to discuss it with. I told them to forget it but they phoned Sai Gopal and within 10 minutes a research student arrived with my little poly bags of gunk and a huge pack of rice in a banana leaf wrapped in newspaper. The days are getting hotter now so it is really good to be picked up by motorbike and slowly trundle into my final year lecture on methanogenesis. Sai Gopal drove me back to sit in the sun preparing my Wednesday lecture until Eswara Reddy arrived to discuss it. He stayed from 4-5 when I then went for my local stroll. Although perfect evening atmosphere I didn't see a single bird, by contrast with a few days ago when I went there with Moin. But as I was turning for home I caught sight of a bird I have been trying to photograph, sitting illuminated in the last offering of sunlight and as I focussed on it there was a flash of gold and a golden oriole settled next to my bird providing me with great photos.

After an hour I got auto direct to Sindhuri Park where I had a hurried dinner of butter roti and panneer mugali. I made it back just in time for Edwin and Thirupal Naik (1st year biochemists). However I am feeling the drive to town and back always makes me feel I am so lucky to be here. I

love the chaos and the relaxed atmosphere – if you can call it relaxed when it is noisy with horns and confused by the muddle of bikes, autos, cycles, ox carts, little cars and everywhere groups of students filling in all spaces between. My auto on return journey had a loudspeaker about the size of my head immediately behind my head, pounding out film music with a thudding base; no problem it just had to compete with all the other noise. At the guest house I was reminded how it is so much better with a couple of students than a complete cohort. Edwin's English is good so altogether relaxing and a pleasure. Edwin's father is a school teacher [sociology] and Naik's is a dealer in kerosene, rice etc. They wanted to know about my time as a research scholar which was nice to remind myself how lucky I had been. I told them I felt I had talked too much – “that is why we came, to hear your special voice”. Come again! They left a short time ago at 11.10. *I am writing this while listening to Verdi's Falstaff; wonderful.* Goodnight all.

February 9th Tuesday Last night I made the mistake of playing solitaire etc after writing the diary; this became obsessive and I didn't go to sleep until about 1.00am. I was woken by the usual noise at 7.00 so got up and went for usual bird stroll, entertained on the way by some of the army people training a horse. He was supposed to trot obediently in a circle on the end of a rope. After a time he did this then they wanted him to jump over a low log jump but he kept running around it. Two assistant solved it by running at the horse shouting so he went much faster and had no time to avoid the jump which he took perfectly well. It was a lovely sunny morning with usual birds including the female koil eating the berries accompanied by a flock of red whiskered bulbuls with their flashy white fronts and rather arrogant black crests. I took no photos except of the koil but saw lots of nice birds. As I returned to guest house I could hear a great noise from what seemed to be a bus leading a procession. In fact, that is what it was. After the bus, providing the noise, was an auto with something, probably related to a god, surrounded by shouting singing and dancing people, followed by more musicians and 2 highly decorated elephants carrying fat priests. I was handed a card inviting me to chant Hare Krishna mantras, produced by the Hare Krishna awareness society. I took some nice pics and was recording film of it all when I had a message that the card was full so I missed filming the elephants.

Everything today has worked out well. Breakfast was on time and hot, probably because Lokanar is back; it was pongal with a large glass of tea. I finished the difficult lectures on the lambda phage then back immediately to sit in the sun preparing the afternoon methanogenesis lecture. I was called back off the roof to my room to meet “two special lady visitors sir”. They were Shilpa and her friend from 2 years ago. I only had on shorts so came into my room slightly embarrassed and blind from the glaring sun. She wanted advice; her husband is working in UK and she wants to know about getting a job. She went to UK with him but after 10 days came home because she couldn't cope with the cold. She had stayed at a place called Watford [pronounced like Ratford]. She just wants something to keep her occupied so I suggested she should write to Biology / Medical labs in University where her husband is [London or Nottingham]. After dictating a suitable letter they eventually left so that I could eat my lunch - provided in a big set of tiffin tins, all hot and good. I am eating a lot of curds, helped with 2 squares of chocolate per day.

After my methanogenesis lecture I was soon back home to prepare regulation of N fixation then off for evening stroll, in the opposite direction from morning so that the sun is behind me. Very few birds but I did see a red wattled lapwing which flew noisily squarking in low circles challenging me to get a picture in flight, which I failed to do. On the way home I commented to a man in his garden how nice it was and earned a cup of coffee with him and his wife plus a small bag of oranges. He didn't say what he does but the wife is Professor of Political science. The address on the card indicates that all those houses opposite the guesthouse towards the hills are for University professors. After a quick wash I was off down the town on a mission to take more films and to look in at the Music School just at the start of Balaji Colony. In the courtyard there were many groups of young students chatting in groups while holding drums etc. One boy came up and started the usual interrogations but he spoke very little English so he took my hand and led me to “practising sir

practising” in a high walled courtyard. One player of a long oboe with 3 drummers who then gave me a very noisy concert which I recorded. There was a lot of dramatic beating of time with hands. The drums were double ended and some were played with sticks. They obviously enjoyed their concert and were keen to shake hands and escort me to the gate to wave goodbye. I then wandered snapping all down Ghandi Road and the temple area. This was very popular in my garland road with many requests for photos. This is the place where they sell coconuts and other temple stuff, and a row of small shops selling rope, and the garland makers. I was even popular in the dark urinal-cum-road leading to the temple, where a lot of people seem to sleep rough, including two old men sitting on a cart which looked as if it was about to become their bed. As I passed they did Namaste and then called for a photo which I had been too sensitive to take. After a dinner of Kadu gobi [cashew nuts and cauliflower] with butter roti followed by butterscotch icecream in Sindhuri Park, I walked to the station and caught an auto for home where Sarath, a first year student, invited himself so he could show me his power point presentation about DNA repair. I am falling aslepp so must leave goodnighte

February 10th Wednesday. I woke at 7.10 to find a gray day with mist or low cloud over the hills which I check through the bathroom window. As I prepared my lecture yesterday I had time for a good walk so set off for the dairy farm, remembering that I had not done a morning walk there yet. It has to be clockwise so that the sun is behind me most of the important part of the walk. The aggressive new security man was there but he just nodded when I said hello [on the way back I got him to actually smile]. The sun soon broke the mist and I had a lovely walk. It soon became too hot for my shirt plus vest so perhaps, as they keep telling me, summer is about to start. I got a close up picture of a tree pie [magpie with chestnut wings] but it does not look as impressive as it should. I now realise that one of my tests for a good picture is to be able to discern individual feathers. In this case I think its feathers are so fine that this may never be possible. I always feel very welcome in this place. I have found a good trick; if I am being scrutinised by some worker or staff there I go over and show a bird picture on the camera. This has never failed to get a happy smile and good wishes. In the farm proper they were creating the biggest haystack in the world with 10 workmen with their towels round their heads throwing huge bundles of hay at each other. Lokanar is back from his village and gets my food now. Breakfast was wada plus a lump of gray-white stuff with nuts and peppercorns and leaves, in a matrix rather similar to marzipan. It tasted great and I am getting to like the very spicy coconut puree that always comes with wada or idlis. Satheesh collected me on his bike and drove in his conscientiously slow way to the Department in the warming day. I finished regulation of nitrogen fixation then talked about my joint project with Sue Hill and Andy Smith. After the bliss of washing the chalk dust off my hands, with tap turned on and towel presented by my tea boy, and my half mug of sweet tea I got Satheesh to drive me back immediately to the guest house to finish preparing my lecture for the Agricultural College. I got in the mood by sweeping the floor and having a bucket shower. I had the most horrible lunch so far. It came in the usual 5 can tiffen stack. The unidentified vegetables, usually the best part, were extremely spicy and also tasted horrible and the slimy green dahl which is just tolerable seemed to amplify the horror. So I tipped most of it into the sports page of last Sunday’s Hindu and dumped it into the rubbish rabbit on the roof.

I am writing this at 7.45 while waiting for Edwin to go to dinner and realise why I am feeling exceptionally hungry. Eshwara Reddy collected me in a jeep with very ugly belligerent looking driver who horned us up the long road opposite the guest house to the Agricultural College where I had to spend 25 minutes with the assistant dean. I was ushered into his room which had a long table extending from his desk which had 6 other professors and retired professors seated. The most talkative was the retired professor of Anthropology. The dean himself was quiet and embarrassingly deferential, but a nice man. The head of research came in wearing a little blue cap like Andy Capp which he kept on all the time. This seems to be a common tradition to meet staff first and engage in smalltalk which I have to lead. I was expected to be an expert on English agriculture so I complied

only to be quoted later to a late arrival; I think we do grow potatoes and sugar beet and wheat and barley and beans don't we? The talk was in a nice air-conditioned hall with an audience of about 100, a quarter of whom were staff sitting in the front. I was introduced by Eshwara Reddy, using the printed CV that I had previously given to Sai Gopal. "Professor Anthony was born on the propitious day of 27th of June 1939 which means he is 70 years old but we cannot believe this, he seems such a strong young man. Then all my international visits were listed, with committee membership and editorial work and so on. I promised that my lecture would be 50 minutes English time and amazingly, as often happens, without looking at my watch, I stopped exactly 50 minutes later. We then had a bit of dithering about while it was decided who would present me with my gift which was publicly unwrapped; "especially chosen because of your interest in birds that you are well known for". It looks like an ornament from a huge iced cake with a group of doves made out of what looks like icing sugar. I don't know if it will make its way home. The dean said a few words including the suggestion that if the students want to come to UK to study then I will probably be able to help them. I said I would like to chat with the students as they had been the most attentive of my audience and I was told that will be possible later but when I reminded them they said "no problem sir they will come to the guest house". Instead of chatting with the students who were waiting patiently outside the lecture hall I was escorted by the staff to the dean's office for tea and more small talk. The anthropology professor asked rather belligerently "when you are planning your research do you ever take into consideration how you can do it to help your fellow man". He got the simple answer, no. But I had to expand and explain that basic research underpins all useful research etc.

I was then bundled out of the building into a jeep and driven the long road home where I have slept for 30 minutes and I am still waiting for Edwin. He is the intelligent lean biochemist who visited a few nights previous. I had a phone call from Moin with good news. I had arranged that he could visit the IISc in Bangalore some time this week. He is there for an exam on Saturday. Having been persuaded that it is ok for him to phone directly to Nagaraja [head of microbiology who I had phoned earlier and to whom we sent CV etc] he arranged to see him today. The good news is that one of the plant geneticists has a place for a trainee project worker [on a small wage] for the next 6 months. This can be extended and modified if he is good and could lead to a PhD studentship if he passes their entrance exam. I think that this is as good as he will get. He is always slightly nervous of accepting good news I think. I said that he did not sound so happy. Whatever the outcome of getting a PhD place there it can hardly spoil his CV that he has worked in the most prestigious research institute in India. He will call later to chat more.

I am still waiting for Edwin; I forgot to check if he meant English or Indian time. Edwin soon came with a friend and we set off for Sindhuri Park for dinner. No autos came so we got a shared auto. These should take 4 persons. We accumulated 8 passengers and we went a long way around, beyond West Church [Christ Church] and out to near Surya's house before coming under the rail underpass to arrive near the hotel. My stomach was feeling a bit precarious so did not enjoy the journey but it was ok. We had North Indian Thali which starts with soup which they had never had before so discarded. They liked the rest. Edwin showed me pictures on his cellphone of them decorating their huge new under construction [protestant] church for Christmas. The local community [Hindu] had donated a crucifix with suffering Christ. This led me to ask if it was a catholic church so Edwin explained this; "we have to accept it sir but we keep it in a separate room". I ask all Christians I meet if they have ever experienced persecution or if they have heard of this. The answer has always been a puzzled negative. After a nice [relatively] peaceful auto home we continued nice chat and they left on their borrowed bike for home.

February 11th Thursday. Typing that reminded me of the class registers that I have to take in which Tuesday is spelt Thursday. I get quicker every time reading the names now, even getting a little applause at the end today. One boy is called Mallikarjuna which I said sounds like the magic word Abracadabra. He was not there this morning so they told me Your magic boy is not here today

sir, he has gone to his village. This morning was fully cloudy as they say here so I prepared my lectures and put clothes into soak. I enjoyed a difficult lecture on attenuation with the 1st years who are a nice affectionate lot. The two really slim boys, Sarath Babu and Bala Ankaiah always make me feel wanted with their happy smiles. The girls seem to be all smiles. It is a pity I cannot get to know them better they are such an attractive lot. I had a nice email from Libby to read while drinking my big beaker of tea before being driven back here to continue with washing. Lunch was again rather horrible. I just stuff it in until I don't feel hungry then wrap the rest in newspaper and bin it. I like the curds and chocolate at the end and the large glass of tea. Only 20% of the class came to the afternoon lecture, the others having gone to their homes for tomorrow's holiday in honour of Shiva. The girls made me take the register then suggested I go home and take rest, as they say. We had a nice chat instead, and then I discussed a student's project before coming home. He showed me his petri dishes with bacteria and pink mould which I confidently told him was Neurospora or more likely Fusarium. This fits with his conclusions and his supervisor's so I am now a real microbiologist in their eyes. For the first time I used photoshop to improve my pictures. So far I have only done the birds, some of which are rather good. The lovely new camera makes it easier to get good pictures from a distance. The clouds nearly stopped me going for a walk but it is never disappointed so I strolled up towards NCC Nagar and across the rubbish dump bit of the forest where I have previously seen red wattled lapwings and paradise flycatcher and forest wagtail. I did see a juvenile paradise flycatcher (brown version) but not much else except for 4 NCC cadets cleaning around the NCC area. They are all SVU BSc students doing maths physics and computing. Three of the four looked like scruffy coarse village boys but the fourth was more pleasant looking and chatted with difficulty in English.

After a sleep I set out for dinner but was immediately stopped by 2 boys on a bike who had come to visit from the Agricultural College. I told them to come back at 9.0 so they drove me down to the place where a couple of Autos always wait and I was soon back in Sindhuri Park. When feeling relaxed the drive there and back is wonderful entertainment, as it was this evening, dodging amongst the autos and bikes with unwieldy oxcarts bravely plodding through the middle of pilgrim families carrying bundles of babies and leading decaying grannies by their fragile thin arms. Dinner is getting tedious; I remembered some dish from last week so ordered it only to realise that the reason I remembered the name is that I didn't like it much. Dinner was disturbed by 4 fat thuggish bullying men with shaven heads who wanted rapid service so they could catch a train. They aimed to achieve this by waving their arms, leaping up and down and shouting at the waiters and the manager. They then were a revolting sight as they mixed up their rice and stuffed handfuls into their faces. After they had gone I asked a waiter who were they and he explained they had to catch a train. When I said they were very rude he said Indians are like that. Not my friends I said, OK some Indians. Just had a phone call from the agric student to say he is coming now only. Their appearance did not suggest they would be good company, no smiles and a bit demanding but as I had said at the end of my lecture that they are welcome to visit then they must receive a welcome. The student came back with requests for advice on going to uk to do MSc in some agricultural subject. He was top of his year but only BSc and that is not same as our BSc. He turned out to be well-informed and easy to talk with. One problem for such students is that they go to education consultants who help them find courses to suit them and encourage them that they stand a good chance of getting scholarships. These do not really exist. Anyway I could help a bit, mainly by showing him the links on my website for Indian students wanting to know about UK universities.

Friday 12th Friday. I had a very disturbed night with an orchestrated attack by trains, buses, shouting guests, dogs and a single mosquito buzzing threateningly in my ear. I did my usual trick of exposing one elbow for her but she ignored it. Today is a celebration of Shiva so I have a holiday so got up a bit later. It was hot and partly cloudy. I left a note that I want Tiffen at 9.15 and set off for a similar walk to last night but extended through the forest past the rubbish place. I saw very few birds and got no pictures at all. It was a bit hot and muggy so I was quite glad to get back to the

guest house where Lokonadh had seen my note and was soon at the door with his little black plastic bag of tiffin. It was masala dosa cleverly rolled in a thin hygienic plastic sheet and newspaper. It was hot and excellent and followed by my giant glass of sweet milk tea. Having no arrangements for the day I did a thorough job of Julia's paper I have to referee. I finished it but really need to check one of the references. It seems that my bacteria have found a nice niche on the surface of plant leaves, living off the methanol that comes out of the stomata during cell wall synthesis. Lunch was the same grim stuff which I stuffed grimly until I did not feel hungry, discarding the excess from my plate into the waiting rabbit and finishing relatively pleasantly with curds and 3 squares of chocolate. After a sleep I sat on the roof reading the Hindu and doing the medium sudoku but it was rather hot but not sunny so I threw a bucket of water over me and spent a couple of hours doing photoshop. Dutifully I set off for an anticlockwise walk around the dairy farm. Being a holiday the open areas were being used for a couple of cricket matches, so I missed my ashy swallow shrikes, yellow wagtails and swallows. As always, however dull I feel, it is a pleasure to be there. As I reached the end of my circuit I passed a young chap sitting alone and peacefully on a rock. For a second he looked remarkably like Madhu, making me stare and causing him to get up and introduce himself. So we sat on the rock seat and chatted. He is a rather old looking 18 yrs and is doing BTech Engineering and lives near West church. He says he walks every day from there to the dairy farm because he likes the peace of nature. Very rare. We walked back to the guest house where he drank almost all the last half litre of water I had left, sat down and asked if I believe in global warming. He does not because some Indian guru claims it is all false. He then wanted me to explain why viruses are not really living things so it was a relief when he had to leave. I realised later that I did not want yet another Sindhuri Park dinner so at 8.15 decided to walk up to the small temple where there are a few small shops to buy bananas and biscuits, forgetting that it is Shiva's birthday, celebrated by more visitors than usual, many of whom were besieging the banana shop for birthday presents for him. A little further down the road was a sweet shop where I bought some of the very sweet pastry things, water and a bottle of cold orange fluorescent Mirinda. Dinner preparation was completed by buying biscuits and plain salted crisps. The shop people are always so helpful or rather they want to be helpful. The street lights were out on the way back so it was like early days except of course for the heavy traffic. My dinner was enjoyable, the combination of hardly ripe bananas and salty crisps being very successful, finishing with half a small bottle of British Airways Bordeaux [Bordox as pompous showing off Chowdappa called it], reading my new book *Dreams of Rivers and Seas* by Tim Parks and listening to Schoenberg's Gurrelieder. I was sorry to finish Barbara Vine's *Frankie and Stankie*, another of the second hand books I bought and must now take back because Libby will like it so much. It has been a strange day but I guess I have achieved quite a lot. Gopi is supposed to be coming tomorrow but he has not confirmed it. I don't want to phone as he will probably be asleep in Chittoor after working late nights. It is yet another of Moin's exams tomorrow; in this case it is the Immunology Institute's entrance exam [*he passed this as he learned 4 months later*]. I hope the results won't be important as he is starting on March 1st at IISc in Bangalore. He is already looking forward to working for their PhD qualifying exam. He loves exams. I leave here a week tomorrow. Good night.

Saturday 13th January. *I am writing while waiting for Gopi, now on the bus from Chittoor.* It has been rather similar today to yesterday. The morning cloud looked less permanent than yesterday so I decided to pursue an idea I had yesterday. It is obvious I guess that the reason birds may not be in a particular place is that they happen to be elsewhere and it is quite possible they will be available, as they say here, for me today. And so it came to pass. As I reached the end of the road towards NCC Nagar towards the forest a huge bird flew into a nearby tree. It was so big I thought that it might have been an illusion, perhaps two birds but it wasn't. After lots of nervous walking half a step at a time I found a pair of common hornbills. Apparently they are not uncommon throughout peninsular India. They were large, gray/beige with huge bills with additional horny bit on top. I had to make a small detour as the cadets and soldiers were all over the place I walk through which is

really a lot of small houses that make up a barracks when they have their camp. As I started to walk through there was a shout and boy in airforce cadet uniform came running to tell me his officer wanted to see me. Although he was trying to be military the boy absent mindedly took me by the hand to take me to his officer, asking where I am from etc. The fierce officer demanded to know where I was going what am I doing etc. So I melted his hard heart by showing him my picture of the hornbills, and telling him I am at SV University as a guest of the VC. His assistant then gave us all a little lecture on bird migration. The army uniforms all look threatening but the whole effect is undone by the little red feathers sticking up from their caps.

I then wandered off towards the hills in the open forest, following a lot of bird noise; it came from a small clump of trees which were occupied by many bulbuls [both sorts] Indian robins, pied bush chat, magpie robins, drongoes and of course babblers and mynahs. Following a wide path parallel with the hills took me out near where I felt the sv vet university buildings should be but I soon was lost. The advantage of this was that I saw another bird that I thought had given up the area – the large blue tailed bee eater, kindly sitting on a wire next to the common little green bee eater. After clambering around on a building site I managed to get to the road home, escorted by 3 teenage soldiers who were at an army college nearby. They weren't in uniform so I had assumed they were students. They kept me company with the usual questions half way back to the guest house. I had told them I would have tiffen at 9.15 and it was now 9.45 but my food was late and they apologised before I could do so. It was usual idlis and wadas, which I am now getting to really enjoy. The 2nd Saturday in the month there is always a power cut, for repairs etc, but no one told me of course. I had planned to do a load of photoshop. I read the paper and mooched about. Did photoshop stuff in the afternoon and went to Dairy farm for a nice peaceful walk that was nicely interrupted by a call from Surya shivering in England. Subbu wanted to meet Gopi so came here to go with me for dinner at Spark. Had boring Kaju Gobi with butter roti and came back to wait for Gopi who arrived by 9.30 exactly on time. By then Subbu was very tired and had gone home. Gopi is always so nice and relaxed so we had very long chat eventually drifting off to sleep.

Sunday 14th January, Valentine's day. I had a disturbed night mainly cos Gopi increased the fan to a frenetic speed which was noisy and too cool. I went for a gentle stroll up past NCC Nagar and saw the usual birds but nothing to photograph. I had left a message on the door for 2 tiffen at 9.45 and exactly on time Lokanadh appeared with two lots of idli wada. After I had mine I woke gopi to tell him it was there so he got up. This process takes about 25 minutes and includes flooding the bathroom. By then I had developed a horrible headache and we spent the rest of the morning watching a DVD - *And there will be Blood*. One lunch only as provided and eaten by gopi while I had bananas and crisps. After Gopi left I felt bereft and gloomy so had 3 aspirins and went to sleep for 2 hours.

The news is full of some idiocy by a famous politician called Bal Thackery who is leader of a hindu nationalist extreme party called Shiv Sena. A film actor recently suggested that Pakistan cricket teams could be part of the Indian Premier League [cricket]. His film [My name is Khan] is about to be released. BT says this is against India and so his film should be boycotted. His hooligans were attacking cinemas and threatening violence to anyone who goes there. Fortunately in Mumbai they called his bluff and a few sane and brave politicians bought their tickets and waved around in front of cameras so, apart from a few ripped cinema screens there was no real problem. He is the man some years ago caused a lot of violence in his state of Maharashtra [where Mumbai is] over the Ayodya Temple leading to very many deaths, resulting from violence against muslims.

I went for an evening walk to dairy farm which is good for birds sometimes and always peaceful and very beautiful. I had forgotten it was Sunday and so the last day to go and say goodbye to Balaji in Thumulagunta [I will try to go some evening this week]. I saw the department secretary boy Suresh playing cricket in a corner of the farm and made him drop a catch when he saw me waving. I sat on the stone seat near the little pond and watched my shadow lengthen on the newly turned red earth with the mynahs, paddy birds and crows drifting peacefully off to roost for the night.

My phone went when I was having a little nap but it was the usual Airtel women telling me about some special deal. That reminded me it was the best time to call home to wish Libby a happy Valentine's day. Hugu answered to tell me that they were sitting down to dinner of roast beef with Paul Martin. I said I was not sure which I was most envious of, Paul Martin or roast beef. Had a lovely chat with Hugu then with my valentine Libby.

I had earlier tried to find company for dinner but realised that I had few phone numbers. Sarath Babu is in his village and Edwin was busy but keen to come Monday night. So I got an auto driven by a child with his dad sitting on the seat beside him, down to Ghandi Road for a stroll into temple and then to Sindhuri park. Very little traffic tonight. I could not face another spicy meal so had noodles with mushrooms and baby sweet corn – with spicy tomato ketchup. Very good. On the way to the start of Nethaji road by the station, where I walk to get an auto to avoid autos taking the aggressive short cuts down the tiny linking roads, barging people off their front steps etc, I met a 1st year student with his brother who had been in the same biochemistry class as my old friend Rajiv Dixit. Almost on principle I went to the hostels, accidentally arriving at the room of 2 zoologists I met at my lecture there. Within three minutes there were eight of them in the room all expecting me to perform; only one spoke good English but he made a good interpreter, especially as he is not possessive and bullying. I entertained them by denouncing Bal Thackeray and they all cheered. His other campaign to get back to traditional Hindu India is aimed at breaking up 'love marriages' and today is his big day for this, his hooligans rounding up unmarried couples they happen to see, breaking them up and forcing them back to their families. I soon made my escape to the room of 1st year student Bala Ankaiah where again they collected the others. Although their English is not specially good they are accustomed to me and I feel I know them well from lectures so I heard what they had been doing to celebrate Mahasivarastri, which was mainly going to local temples. In the paper today's events were reported, especially pictures of people doing their temple stuff: "Thousands of devotees participated in Rathotsavam of Sri Bhuvanewari Sameta Sri Mulastaneswara Swamy today". Bala Ankaiah and his friend then walked the long walk back to my room where I entertained them with my pictures from this year. So I found enough to do today to hide my dull feeling of sadness that Gopi is gone for this year. Just before sleeping Moin phoned to ask did I want what I had previously requested – information about something called 'The stringent response' [regulation of ribosome synthesis]? Anyway I received an excellent short seminar on this for next day's lecture. So to bed.

Monday 15th February. After a good night's sleep I woke at dawn at 6.30 did my usual creep around start. I only just realised today how odd the start of my days is. I don't turn on the main light or put on my glasses till I have shave washed and dressed. By this time I could see that it was not entirely cloudy and was not cold so went for a walk to dairy farm which was a beautiful and peaceful as ever. At last I had success in catching a picture of a flying Indian roller. I nearly got a good picture of a strange water bird on the pond but just as I was creeping over the narrow stone slab that bridges over the deep wide ditch a man in a lungi shouted and waved wildly, driving the paddy birds into the air and the ducks underwater. After usual enquiries he asked to take a picture with his cellphone; please smile for me sir. Then I had to take his picture as he took a picture of me, which won me the right to leave him. Breakfast was the usual 2 idlis and wada with hot sauce; wonderful. The lecture on the stringent response was enjoyable cos I really knew it well. After a bit of coaxing the internet was persuaded to speed up enough to send my review of Julia Vorholt's paper to the journal. The temperature is higher each day, today being 32 degrees [$x \frac{9}{5} + 32 = 90$ def F]. Good news from Sai Gopal that the event in Sri Vijayaniketan college has been cancelled. I had reluctantly agreed to be chief guest. I had already planned my speech to say that I am a dummy chief guest; I am not a politician; I am on time and I know about the subject of the event [microbiology conference]. After Satheesh drove me back I sat on the roof in my shorts and hat reading the Hindu and preparing the afternoon lecture on ascorbic acid production. My vegetable rice, requested as a change with the help of Sai Gopal this morning was better than usual stuff but it

came with a similar vegetable curry that I did not like. At last I know how to make the bottled water more interesting. The small lady cook called in to say hello, having moved to the VC's bungla [bungalow I guess] bringing with her a bag of limes, some of which she presented to me; saqueexed [I like that spelling] into plain water they are lovely. I had a vote in my lecture this afternoon - Question: is Bal Thackeray Good, Bad or Mad? Last two sir; unanimous. To avoid Sai Gopal spoiling any plans later in the week I invited myself to his house this evening. During a read in the sun Suri bought me my two small cups of tea. After I finished two monkeys arrived. The smaller one picked up the cup by its handle and tipped it up, catching the last dregs in his big grinning monkey mouth, then throwing the cup over his shoulder to bounce onto the roof. He then drained the spilt tea off the saucer before throwing that after the cup. They are a sort of plastic so no harm done. I shall leave more dregs in next time for my guests. For Sai gopal Indian time ruled so in the 90 minutes he was late I was able to almost completely prepare my powerpoint presentation for Wednesday morning. We drove out to his house in the north east of the town past the Lutheran church with a constant commentary on the lack of road sense of every other driver; most of the time he was right but he was as bad most of the time. Anyway the air conditioning was welcome as was his nice cool house. His daughter has expanded further but has a big personality to balance and she had a beautiful pale blue sari [or whatever]. *I am writing this while listening to a Shostakovich piano concerto and drinking the last of the BA wine.* Dinner was welcome chapattis and simple veggie stuff and a little rice followed by curds with sugar. I was offered a treat I could not refuse – a ride back on his electric scooter where a horn would be a good idea as it is completely eerily silent. I am sure he wobbled more than to be expected from a small wheeled scooter giving me a thoroughly horrible ride home. This time next week I shall be sitting down to a cup of tea in my lovely home with my lovely tea lady. Good night.

Tuesday 16th February. Waking to a gray cloudy morning at 6.50 bravely got up and went for a walk; always so difficult to force myself to do and always feeling good after 2 minutes. All birds seemed to be invisible as I set out towards my usual place but hearing an odd sound I found I was looking at one dead tree with a mynah, 2 babblers, a magpie robin and a golden oriole all within about 2 metres of each other. Of course my camera was not ready so I missed recording this. There were bushes full of both bulbuls, all competing with their songs, and very happily a Gold fronted leaf bird. On the rough thorny area on the way to the rubbish place and NCC Nagar I saw another bird that I had missed; a small group of common wood-shrikes, and immediately after that the purple rumped sunbird. All birding stopped as I entered the NCC nagar where there is an NCC camp. I was immediately hailed by the most articulate of the boys who stopped me yesterday; he then reeled off my CV and life story to his friends. Quickly home to dosa masala and my glass of scalding tea. By the time Sateesh came to collect me the sun had driven away the cloud to produce a really hot day. The trees, especially Neem tree, are losing their leaves very fastly [as they say]. I finished my formal lectures to the Previous students with a nice summary of all the types of regulation that I had covered, then gave a short lecture covering the key chemical and biochemical stuff they will need for tomorrow's formal powerpoint lecture. Then back to a hot guest house to prepare it. My air conditioning is broken so I sit under a frantic fan in my shorts after throwing water over myself. The noodles I had requested for lunch became the same rice and stuff as yesterday so I ate what I could then delegated the remains to the rubbish rabbit, enjoying a guava fruit from Sai Gopals house. The afternoon lecture to final year was on vitamin B12 production and a few more bits and pieces. As I started a section on Xanthans the girls were a bit agitated and then they called out STOP sir Satheesh has done that already. So, to their delight, I ripped the page of my notes in two and threw them in the bin. Of course I retrieved them and they will easily stick together again.

Back home I sat on the roof for a short time then finished lecture preparation and set out for a walk towards the agricultural college, then over by the bypass road and back through NCC nagar to the house of prof. Reddy who gave me coffee last week, to deliver the card I had promised and to

receive a second cup. The walk was nearly 90 minutes, the earlier part in hot sun, the later part in beautiful setting sun with a cooling breeze with the reward of a nice view of a mature long tailed Paradise flycatcher, near where I had seen it last year. I had earlier arranged that Edwin plus Naik would come to dinner and they arrived at 7.45. I asked Edwin what he thought of dinner at Sindhuri Park and he said he enjoyed it partially. So I took them to Fortune Kences where I had roast quail from the buffet. They enjoyed it very much but were worried by the 1000 rupee bill [£15 for 3]. Sai Gopal told me today that I am likely to be receiving 24,000 rupees tomorrow. We walked through to the Kalyan Residency to check on Saturday's car and were lucky to find the owner Ravi and the driver Mohan there. I did a good job of miming that we only wanted one car not three but that it must be the best car in Tirupati and that Mohan must drive it. Ravi was obviously slightly embarrassed by our disaster and assured me that the car would be new, Mohan will be the driver, and he will arrive after eating his tiffin at 7.00. I phoned the manager of Golden Sun and he assures me he will be waiting at midday for me on Saturday. Back at the guest house had a really nice long chat with Edwin, Naik listening passively as his English is very unconfident. Naik is planning to get a job working for the government [railways office]; Why? To have an easy life. Edwin is an enthusiastic scientist. Anyway it is time to have another douse before lying under the fan to sleep.

Wednesday 17th February. *I am writing this at 10 pm at 29 deg [86 F].* The morning started sunny and warm so I set off for a short morning walk near the pig research place, with my usual end of visit feelings that I may never be here again. The magpie robins were asserting themselves singing from the tops of many trees and the bulbuls and babblers kept up a constant background. I can remember very little else except it was nice. Bashar brought my breakfast of idli wada exactly at 8.45 as requested. Satheesh collected me early to give my long powerpoint presentation of my work plus family pics etc. Kennedy earned lots of mooing noises from the girls but I got applause for the picture of me with my trombone aged 20. Then even more for my 1982 picture. All the students I have been teaching, previous and seniors, were there but as planned there were no staff. I enjoyed it and they seemed to do so. Rehamann [senior] came out afterward to say they all thought I looked so handsome in 1982. Not now? O yes sir but now you look handsome and wise also. Aren't they observant. After hand washing and tea I found there was no internet access (the bytes are too slow sir) so I set out to walk back but was pleased when a bike drew up with 2 biochemistry student; one leapt off and gave me his seat for a welcome cool drive home. After half a pint of water and lime I sat on the roof to read a PhD thesis I been asked to comment on, only to be interrupted by Deenesh who wanted advice on doing a PhD in Thailand which he thought is in the gulf near Dubai so at least I was able to do something useful for him. Having requested noodles I got veg fried rice for lunch which was ok and I ate half of it before sleeping for an hour under a fast fan. At some stage I gave an envelope saying thank you, containing 300 rupees to Lokanardh [I had previously done the same for Bashar]. The afternoon passed quickly, photoshopping some of my pictures.

A bit later Lokanardh came and gave me a different envelope containing 200 rupees, saying something about Sai Gopal. I have no idea what this was about. Charlie had asked me to visit this evening and sensitively had said I could bring friends as he knew I would be struggling to say goodbyes. So I arranged to take Edwin. My evening stroll was around the local houses/gardens with the great variety of big trees. Saw very few birds except for an exciting chase of a roller by parakeets who had a nest in a dead palm tree. I have seen this a few times recently, more usually with drongos chasing the rollers away. The British Gas blues of the flying rollers is so beautiful against the greens of the palms. I got back before 5.45 as that was the time I was supposed to be going to Charlie's and immediately got a call from Edwin to say he would be here with an auto but 6.0. At 6.30 he called to say he was on his way [I had misheard him the first time]. The auto driver was rather dim, indulging in constant horn bashing, and we had to call Charlie 4 times to rescue us as he got lost. He kept looking for street names, hanging out of the auto as we drove. Even I know there are very few street names. It was extremely hot [33 degrees] so I was relieved to arrive, sorry to be nearly one hour late. We were welcomed in the street by Charlie and Teena and led to the

ground floor of their house to sit with his landlord, his wife and daughter. I was so pleased that Edwin was there so I did not have to perform constantly. Teena [aged about 8] immediately recognised a new friend in Edwin and she would not let him go all evening, which he clearly enjoyed. Steven came in, still shy, to tell me he had learned a new dance. Edwin used to be good at this when his age [13]. Charlie told us about his recent trip to Chennai to record some famous singers, who were paid 10,000 rupees per song. Charlie then puts background music onto their performance and then the full recorded CD is sold. He receives 20,000 rupees for this. One famous singer kept singing at a pitch of 72 instead of 88 so Charlie is hoping to speed this up and then record one note higher in the background. If this is successful he is likely to be able to earn much higher salary than he does as a sort of jobbing flute player. We were eventually allowed upstairs for dinner which was puris with mutton [goat] and sag paneer, unpleasant looking green spinach with paneer, tasting good. Poor Edwin had previously told me he does not like mutton but he bravely lied about how good it was to be punished by a bigger helping. Eventually Steven got to do his new dance which was even more spectacular than the previous. We downloaded it from my camera and watched it again on the big computer screen. These two occasions are the only time that they have seen him dance at home. Another advantage of having Edwin is that the horrible ride on a scooter with Charlie and Teena was avoided. We had a good intelligent, non-hooting auto back down the long wide streets from the Lutheran church which is some way out towards Kapilatheertham. Edwin hopped out at Balaji colony and I was back to start to write this by 10.15. I kept falling asleep, risking dropping the computer from my hardboard so closed it and went to bed, after luxurious foot washing. *This is being written next morning.*

Thursday 18th February. *I am starting to write this almost as it happens – 10.00 in morning.* I woke to a muggy cloudy day with a bad headache which I thankfully ignored, going for a walk to the dairy farm, which cleared my head almost immediately. Walking out of the guest house into Tirupati life is always a healing experience. The summer weather has led to loss of half the leaves from Neem trees, and others of course, and Bourgainvillea is expanding everywhere. I expected nothing but a peaceful stroll around the fields but had the reward of seeing a golden backed woodpecker in the sun near enough to get fairly good picture. The large Neem tree up which it moved to hide also contained black headed shrike, drongos, mynahs, 2 koils and 4 golden orioles. The rollers were being chased away by parakeets which were shrieking, the rollers continuous calling rather like a jay, which is of course what they look like. Later I saw the nice little Spotted owl and a European kingfisher as well as all my usual friends; yellow wagtails, bee-eaters, red whiskered bulbuls and paddy birds.

I am now writing while waiting for Chowdappa and Sai Gopal to arrive; I was told they are coming at 9.30 this evening [the time now]. It has been a frustrating day after the good start. It soon became very hot so could not go on the roof even in the shade. So I spent the morning photoshopping and sorting pictures. Sai Gopal said he would come at 1.00 so I rushed a dull lunch and waited but he did not come. I somehow got muddled and thought my farewell function was this afternoon at 4.00 so I did more photo stuff until 3.45 when at last I got hold of Sai Gopal who told me I had the wrong day but he wanted to come here at 5.30. So I went for a very hot brief walk past NCC Nagar where a cadet camp continues, hoping to see the mature white Paradise flycatcher again. Very near where I saw it yesterday a cadet hopped out of the bushes to tell me there is a peacock “just follow the water line”. This was, I assume, the small stream coming from the direction of the hills so I staggered in the damp heat among the thorn bushes and bamboo but failed to see my flycatcher or his peacock. I did surprise a very large bird but I did not get much view of it as it blasted off through the bushes. I guess it could have been a peacock. I was unable to see anything else much as I had to hurry to get back on time and also the cadets were drifting around holding little pots of water, presumably it was latrine time. I got back at 5.30 then waited until 7.30 but no Sai Gopal. Rather irritating because I would have arranged dinner with some of the students as a farewell this evening. It was still too hot to stay indoors so I mooched about the roof until I

thought of phoning home where Clive and all the children were there for lunch so chatted to all of them; so something good has happened. So of all daft things I had to go alone to dinner on my penultimate night. I made the best of it by walking down to get an auto to Gandhi Road which raised my morale, taking a few photos and movies before having Thai noodles at Sindhuri Park followed by delicious vanilla ice cream. *It is still 9.50 and no sign of Chowdappa; I guess he is driving from Bangalore so it is not possible to be accurate. It is now 10.45 and Sai Gopal phoned to say Chowdappa has just arrived so will come tomorrow at 8.0. I told him that I had wasted my day waiting today so I will not be available until after 9.00. It is not really his fault. I don't learn; I should just do what I want and then cancel if there is a genuine problem. Now to bed.*

Friday 19th February. *I am writing in Mahabalipuram on Saturday night.* It turned out that the reason Sai Gopal had not turned up was that he had an important meeting with the VC and other important people including the press to launch the brochure for his Viricon2010 [virus conference] to be held in March. Some rebelling students had turned up and tried to wreck things so the police had to be called. And he is unable to sleep because of the stress. All is forgiven. My day started with a last stroll to my nearby bird walk through the horse parade ground and near the pig area. *“are you convenient to clear my doubt now?”* Every tree seemed filled with bulbuls and babblers and magpie robins all singing a farewell to me. The Neem trees were losing their leaves so fast it was like a snow storm with yellow crisps instead of snow. Chowdappa and his son Vinay were waiting with an old student friend in the foyer when I arrived. As my breakfast arrived with Bashir they tried to cancel it and take me off for breakfast. I rejected this and sent them off for breakfast while I had my nice idlis and wada without them. They returned and left Vinay with me to chat about plans while they went off to the department for an hour. Of course they were nearly 3 hours. Vinay is 21 yrs and clever and much nicer than his father who is a bit of a bully. Vinay was interviewed in Bangalore by Lisa Blenkinsop from Southampton Univ. and she encouraged him that he has a good chance for being accepted for an electronics engineering MSc. We were interrupted by Eshwara Reddy from the Agricultural University with two BSc final year students wanting advice on UK lower quality universities where they have a good chance of acceptance. Of course they leave it to my last day to come when they have had 2 weeks to come and see me. At 12.50 the others arrived to take me and Vinay off to the Bliss hotel for lunch; thalis for them and fried chicken and butter roti for me followed by butterscotch ice cream. Back at the guest house I accepted Chowdappa's offer of his son to drive us to Mahabalipuram tomorrow in their lovely new Hyundai car with AC. Surya has already paid for Ravi's car so he will come in the afternoon so I will have him for use there and to get to Chennai etc.

In the afternoon they had arranged a farewell function in the Department with Chowdappa as chief guest. The place was beautifully decorated with roses stuck all over the walls and the entrance floor covered in lovely patterns. It has never been so packed before. We started with a gentle murmuring prayer sung by one of my favourite girls then a garland was hung on me and we had speeches by students and staff, full of sentimental praising: great scientist, loving friendly person, always tries to remember our names, has nice stories about science, shares his family with us. We will miss you so much dearly beloved Chris Anthony guru sir. Chowdappa then made a pompous speech about how they should help India's next green revolution etc. Then I had to make my usual lecture about bad driving and about the concept of respect in India and how it stops people being individuals. All ended with little votes of thanks and presentation of a shawl and gifts which later turned out to be a dark blue velvet table cloth and a really fine example of Indian Kitsch in the form of a highly decorated jug with mirrors set in the sides. Three times Sai Gopal had asked about gifts and I suggest a table cloth [no not velvet – only white cotton]. Before the function Sarath had called from Gandhi road to ask my favourite colour. He then insisted on coming to the guest house before the function. He ignored my No Need and arrived with 5 other students to present me with a white cotton short sleeved shirt which I had to wear to the function. It is excellent. Vinay had used my camera during the function but used up all the batteries so I had none for taking pic of the students.

The new thing this year is the huge number of cell phones with cameras, wearing me out by a sort of press conference with scores of flashing phones to take pics of me signing autographs. Sai Gopal came up to tell me that Chowdappa had arranged to take me to dinner that night. Controlling my annoyance I told him that he must cancel it as I had already arranged a farewell dinner with students; as he went off to convey this message I rushed to find Sarath to tell him he is coming to dinner. No problem. I failed to contact Edwin or Subramanyam so went to dinner at Sindhuri with Moin and Sarath. Poor Moin had arrived as we got back from lunch after a terrible hot noisy uncomfortable six hour journey from Tadipatri then had to go and spend the whole afternoon waiting for the Principal to sign a letter. He arrived at Virology just in time to come back in Chowdappa's car to the guest house. Dinner was dull and we rushed back to pack, interrupted by Subramanyam come to say goodbye and then Edwin and Naik who presented me with a garish photoframe. We finished a sort of packing by 10.30 and went to bed, falling asleep in the middle of a conversation. *Now I must do the same.*

Saturday 20th February. *Writing this in the Departure lounge of Chennai airport at 2.30 am.* Slept well and was pleased to find we had done most of the packing the previous night. I had managed to give tips to most of staff so I was spared the obsequious visits wishing me a good journey from people I did not know. Chowdappa and son Vinay should have arrived at 7.30 but did not arrive till 7.50. Eshwara Reddy from the agric college came and so did Sai gopal but I had persuaded students not to come. Our journey took 4 and half hours which is about standard. This included a short nice tiffen break in a small AC restaurant by the roadside – wada only for me. Chowdappa provided sufficient evidence during the journey that it is good that Moin is not hoping to work with him. He is extraordinarily ignorant about Universities and constantly causes confusion by pretending he understands when he does not. The previous day he had phoned the Kalyan to say that the driver should go direct to Mahabalipuram by 5.00. Or so we thought; in fact he told them to send driver to Trident. Fortunately dear Surya had phoned Kalyan to make sure all plans were going well and he corrected the mistake. During the journey he told Moin that he would not accept students from SV University however good their marks. I keep trying to like him but keep failing at the same rate. Vinay was an excellent driver and seems to be a very nice boy. Although I had maps and knew the way Chowdappa stopped a good 20 times to ask the way, but some of these saved us making mistakes so I can't complain. It was so good to get past the last small town [Chengalpattu] and travel the last 20 km through the paddy and palms of Tamil Nadu, and even better to arrive at the Golden Sun to be welcomed by the manager Rahmann who had us installed in room 12 opposite the pool within 5 minutes of arriving. We all had a protracted lunch in the open restaurant before sending our drivers off to Bangalore – another 6 hours drive I think. I was soon in the pool and Moin was with his Methods in biochemistry and molecular biology. I have a nice picture of him in lungi lying on the bed smiling happily while reading this book; I shall send the picture to the authors [Biochemistry, University of Surrey]. Before dinner the driver Mohan from the Kalyan arrived so we went down to the town for shopping for earrings for Libby – from the Kashmir shop. *I have just bought two more, better looking ones, for lower price in the airport shop.* I felt so pleased with myself to have achieved something that I would have liked to wander around a bit but Moin was keen to get back. Our fan only had full on/off so we had a noisy night and still managed to be hot.

Sunday 21st February. This was a special day as it was a complete holiday with no reason to do anything. We started with puri masala then drifted gently through the day with swimming and sitting under a beach shelter reading Paul Scott's A Man Child. I cannot remember much about the day except that it was good. We strolled up towards the small village to the North during the sunset period then sat on the lawn with a nice cup of tea. It is Clive's birthday and I surprisingly got hold of him on phone and told him that his actual birth day was the happiest day of our life. I later realised that this might have implied that everything had gone downhill since.

Monday 22nd February. I slept well and I was able to start the day well by checking in on line, in the small air conditioned business office, after which we set off for our final Golden Sun breakfast to be disappointed by 2 large groups, from US and Russia who left no space in the open area and we were relegated to the AC indoor room. I had been paid so much by SV University [24,000 rupees] that I was able to pay our bill in cash with enough left over to leave some to help Moin in his preparations for Bangalore. I packed most efficiently so that I would not need to do anything in Chennai and then went for a swim before we set off for Chennai. We went the cross country route that we were told was very slow and winding. It was like that until the dual carriage way was completed last year so we had a very fast start to the journey as far as the National Highway where we got stuck in hot slow dusty honking traffic North towards the airport and the Hilton Trident hotel. The journey took 80 minutes, exactly twice what it had taken when I arrived 5 weeks previously, hurtling through the almost empty Chennai streets at 50mph at 3 in the morning. At this point I feel I have left India as my bags are taken from me and I am led gently to the reception where I was told that we had been upgraded. I don't know what the room would have been like; I think the difference is that we were facing into the nice internal tree-filled quad so no traffic noise. It was difficult to get Moin off the beautiful comfortable bed to go for lunch. We had pizza which was ok but not as good as any UK restaurant. The rest of the day I spent by the pool with occasional swims. Moin drifted up and down, feeling sad at parting. We spent a lot of time chatting about his Bangalore future in the Indian Institute of Science which is one of the top Institutes in India with a very good international reputation. He will spend 6 months as a trainee with minimum financial support and then a year or so as a project worker at 12,000 rupees / month. During this time he can take the entrance exam for PhD work at IISc. He will be working on the molecular biology of Arabidopsis which is exactly what he wanted. It would have been so much sadder if I was leaving him uncertain of his future. Nothing is straightforward in India. Two weeks ago Moin booked his train ticket [sleeper] from Chennai to Tadipatri, leaving at 10.30 tonight. But the ticket is only finally confirmed at 5.0 on the day of travel; this is because they overbook. If the ticket is not confirmed the buyer goes into an emergency list which is published at the train itself. Fortunately his ticket was confirmed so he has not had to go off by car with Mohan to Tirupati followed by a long train journey from there to home. We had another disappointing meal in the hotel. He had fish and chips and I had steamed fish which was too lemony but it might just be that I was nervously off food. Traffic remains heavy in Chennai until about midnight so Moin had to leave by 8.30 to get to the train station which is in North Chennai, our airport hotel being in the South. His bag was full of my clutter including nearly 4kg of grapes brought to Tirupati by Chowdappa; plus electrical extension lead, Toucan bedside light, 3 floor mats, a packet of Walker's shortbread and cleaning cloths. And my paperback versions of John Keay's History of India and Forgotten Wars by Bayley and Harper. I only recently found that he is interested in reading Indian history so that is really good. It meant that my packing was very easy with me having less to carry home than when I came. Had our sad farewell in the courtyard of the hotel in the hot dusty steamy night with the blasting impatient traffic nearby. Mohan the driver was also a bit emotional; he is aged about same as Moin and was very good, intelligent and safe. He was also aware I think that the reputation of Ravi and the Kalyan depended on him. So off they went, creeping out into the slow traffic both waving wildly out the window, leaving me to dry my eyes, check my wake up call and car for the airport. I did final packing then tried to find something on TV to distract me but failed and quickly fell asleep after a bit of a hassle with the alarm clock. I was woken after 3 hours sleep at 1.00.

Tuesday 23rd February. The drive to the airport took about 5 minutes and I was soon going through the routine including my enquiry about how nice do I have to be to encourage you to give me an upgrade. Sorry we are full and we can offer you £250 if you go on the flight to London by way of Mumbai. I spent my last 1000 rupees on some more earrings for Libby then bought a vegetable sandwich and a bottle of Mango juice before writing some diary on the laptop. There was a more violent than usual business of getting through the boarding gate; the staff were turning

people away if their seat numbers were not what had been called but they did this so politely in the face of some rather obnoxious fat [always fat for some reason] Indian business travellers. I passed through the last passport check and was going down the ramp into the plane when there was an announcement asking me to return to the last check point. My doubled heart rate dropped to a peaceful safe rate when I was given a new boarding card for the next Class up. This meant I was in row 12 with a bit more leg room and elbow room and more important not immediately next to the baby that screamed most of the night. We had a Scottish stewardess who spoke very fast and kept saying we had a wee time to wait but please do not use the rest rooms. The flight home was good but food was horrible; we were soon served with rubber omelette with some horrible tasting potato stuff and the remains of a burnt tomato. I watched 2 excellent films, helped by the higher class earphones: *Amelia* – about the US lady flying pioneer Amelia Earhart [with my lovely Hilary Swank], and *An Education* with Carey Mulligan who won last night's Bafta award for her performance in it. After a perfectly timed flight I was very soon off, from my seat near the front, collecting my bag, almost the first off, and back with Libby for a nice drive home in the dull grey/brown English countryside with not a hooter to hear.

Thank you to India for another good visit; and thank you to Libby and Hugh for tolerance of my absence.

Birds seen in Tirupati this year [in standard book order]

Dabchick; little egret; cattle egret; paddy bird; black winged kite; pariah kite; shikra; partridge; moorhen; red-wattled lapwing; little brown dove; spotted dove; rose-ringed parakeet; Koil; Coucal; brainfever bird; spotted owl; palm swift; house swift; white-breasted kingfisher; common kingfisher; blue-tailed bee-eater; little green bee-eater; common grey hornbill; Indian roller; coppersmith; golden-backed woodpecker; common swallow; Indian pipit; large pied wagtail; yellow wagtail; large cuckoo shrike; black-headed cuckoo-shrike; common wood-shrike; small minivet; red-vented bulbul; red-whiskered bulbul; common iora; gold-fronted leafbird; ashy swallow-shrike; paradise flycatcher [brown and mature white]; magpie-robin; pied bush chat; Indian robin; tailorbird; ashy prinia; Indian prinia; common babbler; rufous-bellied babbler; purple sunbird; purple-rumped sunbird; spotted munia; common mynah; Indian tree-pie; black headed oriole; golden oriole; jungle crow; house crow; white bellied drongo; black drongo; 60 species.No hoopoe; fantail;

Books: John Keay's History of India and Forgotten Wars by Bayley and Harper. John Masters [not finished dull]; Asta's Book by Barbara Vine; Paul Scott, A Man Child; Paul Scott's The Mark of the Warrior; Barbara Trapido's Frankie and Stankie.

For website pictures for 2010 go to:

<http://www.chris-anthony.co.uk/WEBPAGES/INDIA/india20010pics.html>

For videos: <http://www.chris-anthony.co.uk/videoindia.html>