

Summary: Southampton to Heathrow; Heathrow to Chennai by British Airways. I was met by Moin, my very good student friend who is now in his 2nd year of research for a PhD in Plant Science in Hyderabad University. Stayed night in Trident Hilton near airport; next day by car to Tirupati to work in Sri Venkateswara University, staying in SVU guest house. I was guest of Prof Sai Gopal, Head of Virology and Microbiology Departments.

15th January Sunday. *I am writing this at 9.0 on Tuesday evening in SVU guest house after dinner in Kalyan Residency.*

Saturday night I had special nice farewell evening with Libby and Hugh seeing the film Sherlock Holmes then dinner at Bellini's. Up at 5.00 am and off to Heathrow with English Rose Collection car to terminal 5 at Heathrow. 70 minutes only. My usual gut nervousness was diminished by an immodium the night before [sorry about personal details but this account is partly for my benefit]. Although nicely sympathetic, the BA lady at check in said there was no chance of upgrade; she even showed me her computer screen to explain why [they have to be full in cheap seats to move anyone to higher level]. It was a beautiful clear sunny day. No hold ups – just a long wait. My seat was as requested, near the front but also near the babies. Two mothers let their little boys run up and down the narrow aisle but they were quiet and cute so forgiven. I sat next to a young woman who was going to a conference on disaster management in Chennai; she did not understand me when I asked if there is something she knows and I don't. I did not read much but watched two films. Food was good, especially the Indian breakfast of Uppum.

Monday 16th Jan. Chennai airport was even smarter than last year, all shiny marble floors and stainless steel. Immigration was very fast and my case appeared even before I could call Moin to say I had arrived. I was met by him and driver from Trident. As has been the case for the last few years they are still re-building the outside of the airport so we had a fight in the hot humid half-dark through passengers, drivers, cars to find our car. Having found it we were at the hotel within 10 minutes. Moin had already checked in so all was very quick. After a short chat we were asleep. Up at 9 for breakfast which I did not feel like, so had cornflakes and tiny orange juice. Moin had slightly more but was surprised that they had so little choice of Indian breakfast. I was nervous that our driver from Kalyan Residency had not arrived but after a bit of hunting we found him asleep in the car park. I had intended to sit by the pool for a time but Moin was keen to avoid heavy midday traffic. On check out I reminded them that my arrangement was to exclude breakfast so they removed 1500 rupees from the bill. The car had AC but little space so my big suitcase sat on the front seat. During hard braking the driver leant across to stop it going through the windscreen, usually while on the phone with his other hand.

The journey through Chennai out to Poonamallee was unbelievably smooth, as were the main roads which differed from those on my carefully prepared maps. Total journey was 3 hours [Google had said 2h 40 min]. I must have dozed as I did not notice us go through Tirutani which is usually slow hot dusty and generally grim. Perhaps it was cos I paid extra for AC car. So an easy journey but I still did not enjoy it enough, which is a pity as it should be enjoyable. I suppose it is stupid age. Much of the time Moin was quietly phoning his lab giving directions to his 2 lab assistants. He is unchanged in appearance and is great company. At the guest house I was welcomed by all the usual gang especially Lokanardh, the small dark man, and deaf Sury who snorted and grunted his appreciation of Libby's best wishes. My room looked so bare and cell-like until we rushed around unpacking and getting it into a comfortable mess. Lokanard went and got some lunch for us – rice and dahl and dilute samba soup stuff. We followed it by shortcake biscuits and the lovely sweet ball things in syrup that Moin's mum had sent. Sury then came in with 3 cups of sweet cardomam tea after which we slept for an hour. After raiding the conference room for chairs and spreading my lunghis around we set up the internet on my computer using a dongle provided by Moin, and got my small Samsung mobile phone working. I had my usual feeling that it does not seem a year since leaving here. Sai Gopal turned up with a youngish professor of Physics who seemed to know very little English and chatted for some time, arranging to call in

tomorrow to discuss my programme. Because he has been given some special big grant [PURSE; Promotion of University Research and Science Excellence] he thinks he is going to be able to pay my air fare which will be good.

He then drove us down to Balaji Colony to a new restaurant called Sizzlers. It looked OK when we went there for lunch there last year and Surya said it was ok but SG wanted Moin to test it for hygiene. He felt the responsibility was too great so we went shopping down Gandhi Rd before eating at our old favourite Sindhuri Park. This is the strictly vegetarian hotel/restaurant on the side of the square containing the large temple tank. We bought the usual starter kit of 4 small mats, coat hangers and a small bedside light which is rechargeable so I did not need to buy an extension cable. Gogula stores, run by a kind friendly man, the brother of a Esperanto friend of Sury, was closed for the Pongal holiday so we went next door to buy 2 bedsheets. The cotton ones were crude and heavy so we bought 2 very nice ones which they said were silk but they do not feel like that. I love the atmosphere down Gandhi Road and around the temple tank outside the Sindhuri Park Hotel). It is like coming home to a separate life. I am so glad that Libby came that time as I always think of her as I wander around. As we walked down the marble stairs with their cool brass handrails the sound and smell and dust almost disappeared and was gone for ever as we forced our way through the huge heavy wooden doors into the restaurant. It was very full with all the familiar waiters who came up one by one to shake hands and stand speechlessly grinning at me, as they do not speak much English. We had butter naan and something kaju [cashew nuts]. Very good, followed by even better butterscotch icecream. Then back home to an attempt to sleep. The traffic noise was as usual and the dogs more frequently noisy. I scared off the first batch with my powerful green laser but they came back later to wake me again.

Tuesday 17th January. Although very disturbed I did get a lot of sleep and was pleased to be woken by Lokanard with 3 cups of tea. Breakfast was wonderful; idlis [rice patties] and Wada [spicy doughnuts] with red spicy soup and cream of spicy coconut. SG had said he would come at 10.30; no sign so I phoned at 1.00 and he said he would come immediately; no show. He eventually came at about 3.00 just after we had set out for short stroll. Eventually he came at 6.30. We spent the day drifting in and out to the roof garden in the sun at 30 degrees. Each year of course the trees are taller, including the very slim Ashok trees, the huge mango tree in the courtyard and Eucalyptus trees at the back of the guest house. Moin spent a lot of time chatting with his two lab assistants, directing their experiments as they did them. I read a little more of the Sunday Times which I had not read at all on the plane. They sent the usual excessive lunch, from a town restaurant, with huge amounts of rice wrapped in newspaper and stuff in little polythene bags tied with string that we did not even open. As I was hungry it was good. After lunch we had a good sleep, then a little stroll around the small roads of the staff quarters between the rail and road. There are many Neem trees there whose leaf arrangement Moin has pointed out sometimes resemble the beta-sheet structures in Methanol dehydrogenase. Moin then set off for his 16 hour train ride back home in Hyderabad. He just texted to say that when the train stopped at his home town his mother was able to bring his dinner to the train.

At 5.0 I set out for a stroll up through the edge of the campus towards NCC Nagar opposite the guest house. This passes the home of a friendly family I got to know last year, with their 2 cows and newborn calves tied to the gate post. Lokesh's sister and aunt saw me and waved me over. I explained that I would continue my walk and call in on the way back. A beautiful evening but saw few birds. Lokesh wasn't there on the way back but he soon ran and caught me and walked back to the Guest house where we tried to chat. His English is very poor. He is in 1st year of engineering college which is taught in both English and Telugu. I showed him family photos and sent him off with some chocolate. Sai Gopal soon arrived and called the enthusiastic Botany Prof. [Sudarshan] who lives near Lokesh to come and join us where they hatched some scheme in which Sudarshan will film my lectures and also broadcast them in real time world wide. I persuaded them that this should be for special formal lectures only. "We want to film you sir so that we have a record of your important visit for our Archives [pronounced as in Anchovies]". SG then drove me down to the end of Gandhi Road so I could go to Kalyan for dinner and to pay Ravi for our car. He was not there but I had a nice dinner of Hydrabad Dum Biriani [Veggi] and Pistache icecream while reading my new Kingsolver book.

So here I am again in my cell thinking I am missing my family. Good night.

Wednesday 18th January. Had a good night after putting in earplugs. The howling dogs still penetrated through them but I think I am becoming accustomed to the noise. I woke at 8.00 and decided it was too late and too cold for a walk. Lokanardh came with welcome tea at about 8.45 and told me he would bring breakfast at 8.00! We must improve our communication somehow. SG came at 9.0 after I had a very hurried good breakfast. And we debated how my lectures will be arranged. He is paying everything from a huge grant he got with other departments. It is called a PURSE grant: Promotion of University Research Science Excellence. He has used it to refurbish to a very high standard the dirty old building I lectured in last year and filled it with good equipment. He has some grandiose plans that 5 different departments will all come to my lectures but I have made a bit more sense of it all. I will do my usual molecular biology in mornings and anyone can come. In the afternoons I will give more technical research lectures. I had hoped to avoid afternoon lectures altogether but I seem to have failed. I was toured around the departments to arrange all this. The best was biochemistry, as usual. Thyagaraju immediately pointed out that all the students are not back yet so I should start on Monday. Good plan. The new lecture theatre is very attractive so it should be good. After a minimal lunch of veggie rice and curds I fell asleep for 90 minutes. Then sunbathed while getting to grips with my camera instructions. At 4.30 I walked to the dairy farm. The first part remains attractive but they have built a long wall cutting off my route to Thumulagunta. I found a way around only to find the hole in the wall on the far side is now blocked up. I climbed on some convenient concrete blocks and then had to jump down slipping ungracefully [disgracefully?] on my back amongst some barbaric thorns. No damage. Got some nice pics of little brown flocking finches and 2 large blue-tailed bee eaters. As I wandered weary back into the guest house Subramanyam [smiling +earring] arrived to receive his camera. Very happy. We went down by auto to Sindhuri park for rotis and kaju gobi [cashew nut plus cauliflower]. Then home again. He has just left so I am rather dutifully writing this. Goodnight.

Thursday 19th January. Had a terrible night due to the dogs beneath my window where they are able to hide from my laser zapper. Got up slowly and set out at 7.30 for a walk in a straight line past NCC Nagar along a narrow paths towards the early sunlit hills. There were many bulbuls but not much else until the last 200 yards when, standing in one place I saw both bulbuls, both drongos, parakeets, bee-eaters, scarlet minivets and a golden-fronted leafbird which is predominantly emerald green; got a very good picture of it. Breakfast was idlis and wada with orange spicy soup which always leaves me feeling happily full but snivelling and spluttering for a time afterwards. Walked down to the Biochemistry Department to try to arrange lectures with Murthy (Head of Dept.) but he was 'out of station'. Very glad I went as I met Vijay Kumar, an old biochemistry student friend from 5 years ago; he is back doing a PhD. I then met Sunil's labmate who told me that he is away at his native place with fever. She gave me his current phone number and said he should be back by the weekend. He is the thin gentle student who was badly treated in the department last year. I phoned him later and found he is much happier as he now has a PhD place. Part of the new PURSE building is an IT lab with a competent young engineer who arranged to go and buy me a USB extension that I need. He then gave me a lift back to the guesthouse. Had hot bucket shower etc and sat in the sun finishing the Sunday times review pages. Had identical lunch to yesterday and slept heavily till SG turned up to tell me the local paper is coming to interview me sometime tomorrow. I then potted about copying some photos onto the computer and then for the first time reading the computer's instructions – very helpful. At 4.30 I repeated this morning's walk and saw a few more birds in the wonderful setting sun. Everything is much greener this year, making a colourful contrast with the orange-red soil. At last on the way home I managed to get good pics of the water hen on the NCC Nagar pond that had eluded me last year. The pond is strange as it changes colour daily. Sometimes just a dull brownish pond then next day a vivid green. Did a few emails then down to Gandhi road to try using the low light special system on my new camera and got some nice pics of temple and some widescreen videos before having a chefs special in Sindhuri Park – panneer, alloo, kaju with usual butter roti. As soon as I sat down a man from neighbouring table came and sat down to chat; he was Dr T. Damodharam from environmental science who apparently I had met and had 'very inspirational chat' with last year. After staggering up the stairs into the heat and noise outside I grabbed an auto to First gate of SVU to call in at B block to see 2nd yr microbiologists from last year. Only a few were there but we had nice brief chat. They

always make me feel that it is a good thing to visit them, with smiles and handshakes and “please wait sir while I go and put on a proper dress”. Harsha, one of the few I remembered well was there and we chatted about the problems of being Muslim in India [nothing very serious]. I always get a shock when I first visit their rooms. This one had 9 ‘beds’ in it. The floor near the door is like a temple entrance, completely covered in sandals, and much of the space is taken up with strings crossing the room with clothes hanging. As usual I was escorted to the gate of the campus and was then lucky in getting an auto home. This saved the students dutifully walking me the 2km home. Then wrote diary and watched 4th episode of House of Cards on DVD. This is the one about politicians that started the use of the useful phrase “you may think that but I could not possible comment (Urquhart played by Ian Richardson)”.

Friday 20th January. I could not stop watching the DVD so didn’t sleep till 1.00. No problem as there were no dogs. I was woken at 7.15 with my 2 cups of sweet cardamom tea so I stumbled stiff about the room, saw that it was, of course, a nice sunny morning so shaved and went for my dutiful morning walk up beyond NCC Nagar. A rare event this morning as I saw 2 new birds. The first, by the pond was a grey wagtail [often seen in uk] and a flock of grey-breasted prinia which I had thought were white throated warblers but these don’t go in flocks. Got really nice picture. Then in exactly the same place as the last three years, by a small area of very tall bamboo and by the stream that crosses the path, a pair of forest wagtails – too rare to be in my small bird book. Saw my usual favourites all in one morning, indian robin, bulbuls, drongos, mynahs, parakeets, magpie robin. This evening I saw a kingfisher but so far have not seen a tree pie, roller or hoopoe.

Had my usual breakfast which leaves me snivelling but happy. Spent the morning sorting photos and continuing to master my camera instructions [Canon powershot X40; with 35X zoom and fast burst speed and high definition widescreen video]. After lunch [same snivelling applies] Flute Charlie came to chat and give me news of his family. All is going well in his work which is mainly playing flute in film music at all sorts of functions. After a sleep I spent a lot of time on the roof sorting camera. Two assistants from the DST-Purse lab arrived to give me a copy of a letter from Delhi to Sai Gopal saying they agree that his huge grant can be used to pay my airfare and fare from Chennai; they will pay 71,870 rupees [about £1000]. This will also cover cost of hotel etc. Very good news. I probably earned this as I spent a lot of time giving trivial advice on it and I also helped them get their A rating in the National Research and Teaching assessment the previous year. Of course it will probably be paid as I board the plane but Surya has told me he can always sell rupees.

I went for a long tiring evening walk up past the Agriculture University but saw no birds. Nice evening breeze and had chats with students who stopped to ask usual questions. One then came up on a motorbike, recognising me from last year. He gave me a lift back the very long part of the walk home. So I jumped off and called in to see prof Sudarshan who lives near the guest house. After they locked up their stupid barking dog they let me in and gave me welcome tea. He is the man who many years ago claimed his son is a reincarnation of a minor god, producing ridiculous little booklets. The son does not seem to be damaged; I met him at dinner there last year. He has just finished his medical degree and now is doing usual medic thing of yet more exams. The price for tea was to listen to Sudarshan’s project which he says I can make a major contribution to. Totally absurd, based on his claim that sugar and carrots are so sweet because the sugar is coated with tiny amounts of enzymes. “Wow is that the time, I must get back to the guest house”. His very beautiful and sane wife came and invited me to dinner for next week. *It is now 7.00 so time to trudge down town for dinner.*

No need to trudge as I got an auto from the door to Sindhuri park where I had butter roti and potato and cauliflower [aloo gobi]. I love coming out of the hotel into the happy evening atmosphere so strolled through the crowds to the lane that leads to Govindsawarmy temple, with its brightly lit stalls selling religious bling. In the temple area I met Chowpatta from the dairy farm who wanted to know why my wife Elizabeth is not with me. He then tried to make me come into the temple but I resisted. Then a nice stroll back all the way to Balaji colony near the start of the long walk home. I struggled with my one little errand. I have used up my Brittany Ferries soap so I tried to buy more at one of the tiny chemists shops which are hardly bigger than a broom cupboard. The little chirpy boy did not understand my perfectly clear SOAP so I mimed hand washing and was offered little bottles of stuff. I was rescued as usual by a passing man who asked me to spell it. He could not distinguish SOAP and SOIP so I had to write it. Success. I met a research scholar on the way back so had nice

chat; he has started thesis writing. I hope he will ask my advice as it would be so easy to raise the standard. I tried that with Satheesh but he never took the advice he asked for. Came back by auto; he asked for 60 rupees; it should be 30 at most so I wandered off, saying 30 only, but by then he had held up buses cars autos bikes cycles and a limping cow, all hooting in the little traffic jam leading up to the Balaji colony traffic lights. To get out of their way he agreed 40 and then was so polite and grateful when we arrived it was obvious that 40 was too much. I finished the evening watching DVD of House of Cards in which prince [in the film now king] Charles is played by Michael Kitchen [Foyle of Foyle's war]. Wonderful but I always get a shock when it stops and I realise where I am.

Saturday 21st January. Slept well again after a 30 minute reading break at 5.0 when a noisy express followed by hooting liberated traffic blast me awake. Woken with 2 teas at 7.10 and bravely don't collapse back onto bed. Repeated yesterday's walk up past NCC and along the path parallel to the hills. None of the special birds of yesterday; all a bit dead until I saw a strange shape in a tree which turned out to be a great grey hornbill who was nice enough to pose for many pictures. And another new bird - Blyth's warbler which looks plain as a garden warbler. The bird book is full of warblers but the distribution map for this state shows only 2 possible warblers. Lokesh ran to catch me up on the last stretch before home, asking me to take a picture of him with his friend. Usual breakfast after which Prof Murthy arrived to discuss biochemistry lectures. He always seems so serious but I softened him up somehow and we had a very sensible chat. Their 1st year students will come to my mol biol lectures with all the other PURSE dept students [if that scheme works] then I will go to his department for bioenergetics lectures. Drifted about then loading pics on computer, sitting in sun then doing few emails before usual lunch and sleep. I am reading Darwin origin of species on my kindle over lunch. It is a really good read. Written in the days when you could say "in my humble opinion that proposal cannot be based on either experiment or clear thinking". I started my article for Wikipedia this afternoon. I checked that it had not been done and made a list of related topics that I can usefully link to, and instructions then started. I cannot think that it will take more than a week so I am collecting a few more topics to write.

It was quite cool this afternoon in the breeze and I sat and read my History of India since 1947 (by Ramachandra Guha) while drinking my teas and listening to the returning crows. I then wandered up to lokesh's house where his 11 year brother rushed up to drag me in. His name is Durgaprasadraj. He rushed in to get me a chair to sit next to granddad. A sister or aunt then bought water and laddoo (food of the gods). Lokesh was not there so Durgaprasadraj entertained me by trying to haul the 3 week old calf over to say hello but he just wanted milk from his mother standing patiently by the gate. Tonight will be the 3rd in a row when I have eaten in Sindhuri park alone. I quite enjoy it, the food is good and the company ok and the walk back always interesting. *I am now feeling hungry and it is 7.00 so off I go.*

For some reason there are no street lights on the road towards town for about 1 km. So I bravely march down the road whirling round regularly if I think I have detected the sound of an auto to grab. On one of these whirls I nearly knocked a student off his bike; he swerved then stopped to ask if I wanted something, then the usual interrogation – "where are you from". He was still concerned that I needed help so pushed his bike with me down as far as the lights. He is doing B Tech in civil engineering in the SV Engineering college – same as Madhu did. He asked for my card and guest house address, so I might have acquired another disciple. I soon got an auto direct down to Sindhuri park for dinner of stuffed paratha and chana masala which was not as good as mine and very fiery, cancelled by strawberry icecream. The restaurant was nearly empty so waiters were irritatingly attentive. One of them, seeing I had some difficulty in managing eating and holding open the page of my book trotted over and arranged a little scaffold of forks and spoons to hold the page in place. I did the same as yesterday and walked all the way back to Balaji colony by the music school. As I was looking through the gate 3 of their students came up to interrogate me. I told them I played cello which I had to draw for them. The youngest, about 15 said he was learning the violin. Apparently they have concerts every day there and I agreed to turn up to listen some day. Then auto home to chapter 7 of the DVD House of Cards. I have decided I have been spending too much time on my own so I phoned Vijay Kumar and arranged that he

will come with me to dinner tomorrow night and I think I will go on my first Sunday morning visit to Thumulagunta. *And so to bed.*

Sunday 22nd January. *Writing this while waiting for Vijay Kumar to go to dinner [biochemistry postgraduate]. Just had nice phone call home.*

I was woken at 5.00am by a violent muted buzzing, eventually tracked to the back of a drawer; it was my alarm on my phone for leaving for Heathrow one week ago. After a short read I slept until woken by two teas at 7.15. It is always such a temptation to have tea in bed and not get up, but resisting this is always rewarded. Had a stroll rather than a walk up past NCC Nagar. On the way I saw yet another new bird. Probably have seen it before but could not identify it. Now the new camera provides the evidence. This was clearly a flycatcher. There are 3 pages of flycatchers in my bigger bird book but only 2 occur in the south and so it was easy: Asian brown flycatcher. Sundays are always nice relaxed days here. Usual excellent breakfast while reading Origin of species then loaded the morning's photos. Then off to Thumulagunta by auto. None of my more familiar boys were there [Barath, Mounshi, Ajay, Bobby] but the promoted 2nd team were great, two of them said they prayed I would come again. They escorted me to smiling Balaji who greeted me with his Grannie outside the small sweet shop at the base of their house. I took individual pics of them all and noted the order and their names and ages, a very popular decision. Then the usual battle of the binoculars, the older ones [12 yrs] remembering the rules and ruling appropriately. Suman (Sumanth?) then appeared. Now very tall and as thin as before, nicely vain with his wavy hair and ear stud. Now 18 yrs. He wanted a photo with Honey, a sweet 12 yr girl who speaks English; "please one photo with my darling". She then went to some trouble to explain that "sir, that darling business is only joke sir". One of the boys remembered I like coffee so he went and asked grannie to get some; it arrived to yells of Coffee for Chreees. It was wonderful drinking coffee sitting on the stone bench against the wall of the house in the shade surrounded by my disciples. One of the boys [Madhu] nestled up to me struggling to say something; eventually honey translated that "I am happy because the other boys are not here so you are my friend now". He then asked if I was good at cricket cos he liked bowling. He then got a ball and ran towards me down the opposite alley between the houses, obviously about to send a very fast hard ball straight at my head, stopping just in time to toss a nice slow ball for me to catch. My extensive training with Matt then came in useful as I sat there giving them all fielding practice. They were brilliant, and I impressed myself. Eventually I set off home with my pied piper cohort streaming behind me. Luckily I got an auto on the main road as it was noonday hot.

Usual good lunch and sleep, then walked all the way down to the cricket ground where there must have been 20 simultaneous games, a relatively peaceful place that was where I first met Suresh in 1992. After getting an auto back I had 'shower' did a bit of preparation for my first lecture [tomorrow] then strolled up to the NCC lake, returning in time to avoid mosquitoes. As soon as I got back my friend Sahir, the young engineer student who I met in the dark yesterday, arrived [not planned]. He speaks excellent English and is genuinely interested when he asks questions. He is aged 19 on 3rd year of 4 year Btec course. His father runs a small electronic goods shop. Vijay Kumar and a friend Murthy, both 2nd year biochem research students then arrived. I had invited Vijay to come for dinner at 7.0 but two arrived at 7.20. This was ok as it gave me a bit of time to chat with Sahir who left soon after they arrived. We soon got an auto to Sindhuri park for dinner; south indian 'meals' – thali. I had one small shovel of rice while they each had 4 shovels, that is 4 plate loads. All very good, finishing with banana. Quick auto home and here I am again.

Monday 23rd January. *Writing this in my usual dead time of 6-7, waiting for Flute Charlie to collect me for dinner. The lady helper here has just bought me two cups of tea. Very welcome.*

Slept well last night with only a short reading break after the noisy train. Woken with [whoops – I mean 'by'] twoteas lady and returned to read as I decided not to walk today as I am starting my lectures. SG arrived at 8.45 promptly, looking a bit haggard. He had been to collect his mother from their village as she had become unwell; a total of 14 hours driving. As I expected there were no more than 20 students waiting for me. The place was set up for projector etc but I dismissed all that and sent them off on a chalk hunt. Only 2 of the microbiology students turned up; it later turned out that the secretary had forgotten to invite the parent department. 8 chemists 2 zoologists and a few unidentified. Vijay Kumar [from dinner last night] came to see if

my prediction was correct - v. few students. They do not usually start till 10.00. Sai Gopal pointed out that if I did not now give a lecture then these students would not come tomorrow. So I gave a very casual introductory lecture with lots of stories and some questions. As always most of them seem enthusiastic and I hope a sensible system will soon operate. At 10 I had tea in the adjacent posh meeting room with comfortable armchairs arranged around a table. At one end of the room there is a small wall-mounted puja table with the usual picture of Sri Venkateshwara which is cleaned and provided with new oil for the little brass lamp each morning. It seems that I will not be getting the 72,000 rupees; that is the total amount requested. I will get what I can legitimately claim – as it should be. It will cover air fare and all travel in India – about £700 – plus expenses of about £400. All good news. After my twoteas I went to see Murthy, now head of biochemistry to arrange lectures there. I will give 8 lectures on bioenergetics starting tomorrow at 11.00. I quickly borrowed an old edition of Stryer so that I could brush up on a bit of thermodynamics while sitting in the sun on the roof. After my usual lunch I slept soundly for an hour then did some more work on the Wikipedia article and did some work on emails from Y. Chen from Warwick who wanted advice; his email was addressed to myself and Colin Murrell [now moved to University of East Anglia] and Don Kelly. Fortunately we all seem to have given the same advice. A few days ago I got a request to sign David O'Connor's leaving card so I sent an email instead. Just received a lengthy reply telling all his plans. He is moving to China not far from Shanghai to set up a lab there in some huge development that is joint with Liverpool University. Brave man. It clouded over at about 4.30 but I went for a walk anyway although it was a bit dull and humid. I plodded right along the NCC road parallel with the hills to the far end then down to SV Veterinary University area and the long long walk home, punctuated by chats with groups of students of dairy technology who have a hostel on the road. Saw very few birds but two of these were new this year. It was getting dark so I only got poor pics – good enough to identify I hope. Bay-backed Shrike and Large Woodshrike.

Charlie has just phoned to say he will be here in half an hour.

He arrived with Teena so we drove with 3 on the motorbike, which I don't like. I gave her and Steven the small microscopes (from Natural History Museum) which they gradually got enthusiastic about, and Steven soon got lost in the book. Teena is getting beautiful and Steven [14] is less shy this year and combs his hair like a film star. We spent most of the evening playing with Charlie's Nikon Coolpix camera and mine. Steven had been told to use only Auto so we spent a long time exploring all its various modes. Dinner was chicken biryani nearly as good as mine but the chicken is in big lumps. Very very good although I had to use my Charlu [enough] more or less continuously. Charlie's mum and dad were there; he was such a contrast to his old drunk days, having fun teaching me new words, promptly forgotten. Steven will dance for us next visit. It is a pity it is such a long trek out to their place as it is fairly peaceful with little twisty back streets and corner trees with the usual mix of village life, old ladies, kids, goats and calves. I insisted on an auto back, rather than the scooter, which was very good idea as it is really quite cold. So to bed xxx

Tuesday 24th January. Had a very disturbed night due to the dogs. I lased them away at about 2.0am but they returned to the front which is closer – and I cannot get at them there. As I had 2 lectures this morning I decided to be lazy and have tea in bed. Then prepared lectures [again] and waited for breakfast. It arrived one minute before my driver so I grabbed my remaining breakfast bar and left breakfast on the table. Most of the microbiology students were there today and a sprinkling from other departments including a sweet smiling girl from biochemistry (Lalitha) who has become my main advisor. I did a proper lecture this time – on the genetic code. Then had an hour to pass before my 1st year bioenergetics lecture to biochemists. Wandered about chatting to research scholars. Then to biochemistry. A smaller class than last year but enthusiastic. I did all the bits that I don't like about thermodynamics – enthalpy, etc, but got it out of the way to start real stuff tomorrow. I was driven back by a research assistant to get a picture for them to use on a banner tomorrow – like a typical Indian politician.

I think there was some function here at lunchtime so instead of my nasty little poly bags of kakhi mush I had a great lunch with gobi Manchurian and 5 interesting items. And a banana, so I felt a bit bloated and slept for nearly 2 hours, waking feeling groggy and unenthusiastic about anything. So I sat in the sun and read a bit more for tomorrow's lectures and then some more of my camera instructions. I am gradually learning more of

its complexities. After two teas I forced myself to walk to the dairy farm, setting myself a project of making a little film of the various parts of Tirupati life. I started with the elephants who were being fed then did my usual circular walk. The 4-5 ft wall that cuts across my walk turned into a benefit today when I saw 2 hoopoes perched on it and doing their crazy dance. They disappeared behind it but then were happy for me to photograph them using the wall as a hide. I wanted a little film of them flying but it was not good as they ignored me even when I threw a brick towards them. I then saw a flock of tiny birds, new to me, coming close enough for a good photo. Altogether a lovely walk in cooling air with nice breeze in the sunset. I got a nice video of a spotted owlet sitting on a post bobbing up and down as it assessed me. This was on the edge of the farm's long cattle sheds. I must have looked rather odd to farm workers as I very slowly edged nearer to the owlet with camera up to my face. They are used to my odd behaviour now I think. As I arrived back 2 students appeared, responding to my general invitation to come at any time. They were final year chemists wanting advice on doing work in UK. I had to show them family photos then take their photos cos they want to be on my website. They were unresponsive to hints and I had to almost throw them out so I could go to dinner.

Quickly got auto to Sindhuri park where I had alloo panneer kaju and rotis, then pistachio icecream. There were some young Russians staying there who called me over for chat; very nice lot, envious that I was staying for weeks and they are staying only 3 days. This is the first time I have met non-Indians in the restaurant. Then auto direct home, feeling tired and bloated. After watching another instalment of House of Cards I tried to phone Sai Gopal to ask that he brings me some money but got a message from vodaphone to say that my number is barred. Same result when I tried to get Moin. I struggled successfully to find a vodaphone leaflet where they give a number for help. 20 minutes later I navigated through a lot of 9-part menus and got an Indian call centre of course; like ones we get from UK but worse. After a lot of irritable chat I got him to get his superior. He gradually explained that when you buy a sim card it is necessary to register it using some photo ID [Moin had done this when he bought it]. They claimed that my card had not been registered and I had not replied to their messages about this. I told him that I get so much advertising rubbish from vodaphone that I automatically delete their messages. It seems it essential that Moin re-registers in Hyderabad where he bought it. "you must phone him to tell him to do this". "HOW cos you have stopped my phone working". So sorry sir I have no power in these matters". Only way of getting Moin was to use my very expensive phone [call cost to UK plus call cost to India]. The stupid shop must have made a mistake. It will take about 36 hours to rectify. So I am stuck without a phone. I watched another hour of the DVD to calm me down again.

Wednesday 25th January. Had the usual disturbed night but ok. Woken by rhythmical tapping on door. It was my tall thin friend from guest house staff last year – Venu – with a huge burning hot glass of tea. Of course I am still half asleep in shorts and wild hair but this did not stop him from giving me a welcome back hug. The day was grey, so again I did not go for a morning walk; in fact the sun soon came out to play and it was usual nice hot sunny breezy day. I cleaned up the room, had usual breakfast and was collected by a lab boy on his old motorbike. They are all lectured by Sai Gopal on driving etiquette – they must drive slowly for me. Of course that means they are less stable and we wobble gently through the campus so slowly that we balance nervously on top of the speed bumps. There were only 9 students at 9.00 but by 9.15 there were about 40. One of the late boys called out at 9.55 that it was time to stop. I told him that he was 20 minutes late so I had the right to keep on "No please sir" from the girls who had been on time, so I pretended to reluctantly relent. I tried to persuade them that it is good to be on time and they promised they would try. It later turned out that I was not successful. As I left a deputation of microbiology students invited themselves to visit me in the guest house at 5.00 today. *I am writing this at 6.15 and they have not arrived.* I have an hour between the end of mol biol and the start of my biochemistry lectures. I spent this in the office of DST-PURSE building where I do my first lecture, drinking tea and chatting with SG and a lady professor from Home Science department [like school domestic science]. She wants me to give lectures on biochemistry etc in her department. I said her students can come to my morning lectures and I could give one guest lecture. Because she was there with Sai Gopal I wrongly assumed that he thought a plan to be a good one. When I told him it was a bit daft he agreed and told me she is a crazy lady (I heard no more about this). The biochemistry students were the usual nice lot

– on time and they answer questions. I have now finished the rather difficult bioenergetics introduction so I can start ATP synthesis. Was scooted back to a rather late lunch, collected by Venu. He is helping here because Suri's daughter is getting married and all the staff have gone. Nice sleep; nice shower; photo sorting and short stroll in golden evening sun to get back by 5.00. The students have not come. As I have no phone I cannot confirm with Sunil that he is coming this evening. Tomorrow is Republic Day and I will not be able to make any arrangements. I will do my usual trip to Thumlagunta. Sai Gopal's mother is getting better but he has to spend a lot of time helping her. Note: Kindle is great success.

BIRDS: I thought the golden orioles had gone but I heard them from the roof this afternoon. I have not heard the brainfever bird. When I looked at my good photos from yesterday I found that the swallows were not our usual (barn) swallows but were new to me – Red-rumped swallows. The tiny (10cm) new bird I saw yesterday is a *Zitting cisticola*, having the alternative name of Streaked fantail warbler. So 4 new species, including the grey breasted prinia and Blyth's reed warbler. All only possible because of the new long lens camera. *I shall now go for dinner and call in at hostels to attack the students and to borrow a phone to get hold of Moin to get progress report on my phone. SG offered me his spare simcard but I stupidly declined earlier today.*

After I wrote this I realised that Moin may not have phoned if my phone problem is solved so I tried and successfully called him. I then got a text message from poor Sunil who is now in hospital; his fever must have got worse or he panicked. So I set off down town for dinner but there were no autos – even near the university entrance where there is always a group of them. At about that place a shared auto pulled up alongside and I decided to use that although it looked very crowded. A man jumped out and grabbed and shook my hand violently “So glad to see you again sir – you must remember me, we were introduced after your lecture last year”. “Very good to see you again, thank you for stopping”. “My honour sir, bye” and off they went leaving me another km to trudge right to Prakasam road where I got an auto to Sindhuri park, paneer butter masala and chocolate ice cream. Being a bit footsaw, footsoar or footsore I got auto to hostels but guessed wrongly and went to B block where I was picked up by a botanist and a biochemist from last year who took me on a noisy hunt round the interior of C block till we found the room of the previous year microbiologists who had failed to turn up at the guest house. Their practical had continued till 5.30 and it had not occurred to them to try to phone; I meanly did not tell them that my phone did not work. Eventually we had 14 students in a room designed for 3 with the usual batteries of questions, demands, stories etc. These groups soon form into layers or categories: a couple who were confident in English who also had nice personalities; some who were interested and quiet and put questions through the first 2; the noisy shouters who always want to know how to study in the uk and how much was my camera. This all corresponds to appearances. The first group are usually nicer looking than the heavy dark scowling last group. One of these wants to be in the police; when I said he already looked like a fierce policeman they noisily agreed. 6 of them then walked back to the guest house for more chats while I lay on my welcome bed. At the hostel 5 of them had cameras or recorders, to show their parents what I sounded like, to get sympathy I guess. I took a few photos then a little film and drove them away after a laser show on the roof with one of them trying to photograph the green laser beam pointing at Betelgeuse in Orion. *Hugh has just phoned before going to work, and Libby going swimming.* I finished my rather exhausting day watching the last episode of House of Cards. I had missed the later episodes when it was first shown. Wonderful.

Thursday 26th January, Republic Day. I woke early and read till my huge glass of tea was brought by slim smiling Venu who always greets me as if I am the most important person on earth; very observant. I had a very dry throat and a voice one octave lower than usual; I hope it is the result of 2 hours lecture, 1 hour chat, 6km walking, one hour with students. It seems ok now so nothing to worry about. No lecture today so I had the luxury of a walk starting at 8.15, having asked for breakfast at 9.30. From Venu “no problem sir would you like puri, dosa, wada, idlis, pongal”. Good idea – I chose pongal – a mix of ground rice, cashew nuts, black peppercorns, chillis, sesame seed etc. Then a long walk up past NCC nagar with plenty of time to linger. Got nice pics of 2 grey partridges. Saw: koils, coucal, doves, magpie robins, all bulbuls, Indian robin, coppersmith, parakeet, sunbirds, babblers, tailor birds, fantail [but no pic], bee-eaters, hoopoe, small warbler. No orioles although I thought I heard them. So far this year no Rollers, woodpeckers or Indian treepie.

Prepared tomorrow's 2 lectures sitting in sun on roof, feeling rather lethargic and not enthusiastic about anything. Venu bought lunch at 1.30; very basic veg rice plus huge poly bag of kakhi dahl which I emptied over the table. Fortunately the Sunday Times sports page rescued it. Slept for 2 hours and woke feeling a bit as if my throat is about to cause problems and with no energy. At 5.0 I pulled myself together and went for stroll up to the NCC nagar pond. The rail crossing had been closed a bit early for the 5.10 train so there was a back up of buses all the way to the guest house. So I waited till the train had gone and made a little film of the released swarms hurtling towards me. As I was about to turn it off 2 teenage boys appeared to ask the usual questions. They are in some sort of army college in a small town nearby; I dutifully took a photo and off they went. Soon up the road there was a shout and a small boy (Shennugan) came hurtling out of his house with 3 friends. I have taken his picture the last few years; he looks 10 but is 14. More pictures then up to the pond where for first time this year I saw 2 red-wattled lapwing and got nice photos including the wood sandpiper. Then a nice pic of kingfisher in the setting sun. They were all scared away by two yobs throwing stones into the pond. On the way back I passed Lokesh's house where his grandfather was burning the strewn rubbish, mainly polythene bags by the road outside. The boys were playing cricket as I got back so more pics and a nice little film. I sat on the roof for 20 mins for the last of the homecoming crows. The prospect of walking all the way to the town for dinner was especially unattractive this evening so I sat and read for a time and then, nice surprise, young Sahir arrived. He is the civil engineering student who I had collided with a few nights ago on the dark road – just come to say hello sir. His English is excellent so had a nice chat. The prospect of going to town was still unattractive but I had no bananas or crisps for picnic dinner. Sahir solved it by cycling up past the railway crossing to get bananas and crisps and bourbon biscuits. When he arrived I was watching a video of a cello/piano recital of Brahms' cello sonata which he claimed he liked. It is now 9.10 and the sonata is finished and he has gone. I finished my dinner with Christmas cake – wonderful. I shall be really self-indulgent and watch a play by Oscar Wilde - The Picture of Dorian Gray.

Friday 27th January. Woke early with dry slightly sore throat. Help! Venu appeared grinning in his bobble hat and scarf at about 6.50 with twoteas. I decided to lie in so that I would not get too dried out before lectures. I asked for tiffen at 8.15 so I could be sure of an 8.30 breakfast but Sai Gopal arrived first at 8.45 so I skipped breakfast. He was on his 22 year old scooter whose suspension had been suspended so we ground rather slowly over the many steep speed bumps on campus. Only 3 girls were there at 9.0 but eventually I had a reasonable size class but with many of the microbiology boys who had sworn to come on time conspicuously absent. Two girls are always there, one in black muslim dress and the other in pretty Kurta and trousers (Bhanu and Lalitha); they are from biochemistry and Prof Murthy [Head of Biochemistry] immediately knew who I meant when I said he had 2 very good girls. They always get my jokes [the main criterion of intellectual strength] and are fun to teach. After the lecture, on protein synthesis, I had an hour to spare so I had tea in the PURSE office, chatting with the research people and technician. They have been appointed but most equipment is not arrived. One of the research scholars is working on millet genetics in Hyderabad so I told him about Moin, working in rice genetics and it turns out he knew him from being in same hostel. He also knew my old biochemistry friend Ravi. My voice seemed to hold out but I did not want to talk continuously so went for a stroll in the sun where I met Sunil, looking very feeble. He had been diagnosed with pneumonia and was on heavy antibiotics and had coughed up blood. He was hoping Sai Gopal would let him have a few days off but he thought this would not be accepted. A few minutes later sai Gopal came up on his scooter. I told him that I had recommended Sunil to immediately leave the department so he would not infect others but that Sunil wanted to apologise to Sai Gopal first. I hope that did the trick. Then a lecture on mitochondria to biochemists followed by a quick tea and biscuit with Murthy. I found a driver to get me back where there was a welcoming committee of apologetic staff led by the steward Naidu, all worried because I did not eat breakfast. Sorted out future plans. Still felt under the weather so did my usual and washed clothes to feel I had achieved something. Usual dull lunch and short sleep. Bravely set out again to work on the Wikipedia article. It seems I can edit the ones with errors and I can start a new one, giving good academic references. So I am doing that. In the article on PQQ there were 4 major wrong statements in the first paragraph and all the cross references were wrong; they looked ok but if the word appears in an article elsewhere the reader is directed there although it may not

be appropriate. It said I had discovered an alcohol dehydrogenase [true] but that word links to an article on the wrong sort of dehydrogenase. So I will aim to do my stand-alone article and then refer to it by correcting all the wrong ones. [I later found that I needed a high speed internet link to do this so eventually gave up].

I still felt feeble so went for a wander in the dairy farm where at last I saw an Indian roller on a phone wire; glad it has not abandoned Tirupati. I also spent 10 minutes standing at the edge of the field full of long grass, leaning against the new wall waiting to see the noisy bird hidden except for very rapid little hops into the air. It was an Indian prinia next to a female Indian bush chat. *It is now 6.45 and I shall force myself to get down to Sindhuri park for dinner.*

Just returned. It took a lot of willpower to set out but, as usual, I was glad. I had to walk the 1.5 km to the gate to get an auto then through an even noisier than usual Gandhi road to an empty restaurant where I had kaju masala [cashew nuts with universal general purpose spicy khakhi ? sludge] but tasted good; only one butter roti as I tend to get too bloated if I have 2. Kindle is wonderful but the novel I am reading '*Jeff in Venice; death in Varanasi*' was a bit too full of images of sewage-laden Ganges. Again I forced myself not to get a direct auto home and took out my camera and wandered down to the temple through the throngs of pilgrims buying shiny junk. At the biggest bling stall, full of the pictures and models of the god surrounded by flashing multi-coloured lights and crackling songs there was a small boy, about 10, who stood staring completely entranced, in his scruffy shorts and T shirt with only one arm, bare feet, a smile like a dentists advert, worshipping. I forgave the lot of them. I tried to get a photo [video] of the row of aggressive religious beggars at the temple entrance but after a few seconds one of them saw me and started to wave. I don't know if it was friendly or not so I just walked out. At the side entrance in the dark street I was trying to take a picture of the goparam tower when I sensed something by my right ear. I turned and came face to face, with an old man, unshaven with thick round national health glasses and a huge bag of something balanced on his head. I smiled and said O hello and got a rather wise sort of pitying smile back and a brilliant bit of head wagging while juggling his load; then off he walked, necessarily erect down the grubby alley to Gandhi road.

I have failed to get my room swept although I was twice promised "This morning sir". So I bought a grass broom for 60 rupees then caught auto at the end of Nethaji road to go home to Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*.

Saturday 28th January. *This is just like the old days. I am writing this while waiting for Gopi to arrive from Chittoor where he is visiting his parents.*

Slept ok but woke with sore throat and even deeper voice than yesterday, feeling grim. Arrived at my lecture to find they had put up a big banner across the entrance with my photo on it – same as on my website. The usual 2 girls were there but others drifted in. One of the microbiology students who was absent yesterday said he had come because he was told I was angry that they did not all come; he had bad sore throat etc. In my hour between lectures Sai Gopal remembered to give me 10,000 rupees which will see out my next three weeks and also pay for the car. He then insisted that I tell him my afternoon programme for next week – he wants a series of 'practical' seminars for all the postgrad research students in all departments. He likes to send out notices all around the University bragging about me being in his department I think [or perhaps to make the most of my valuable time]. I told him previously that I did not want to do afternoon lectures but he ignored this; I have insisted on a 2.30 start so I get a bit of sleep after the 2 morning lectures. I gave a general title of Enzymes; assay, kinetics and purification. If the right people go then it will be useful. I just about staggered to the end of my biochemistry lecture before plodding gently home in the healing sun by way of the main University entrance. This was partly because I wanted to see what the function was that was making so much din in the big auditorium that looks like a deflated airship; it was a special event for kids from English medium schools.

At the main gate an auto with a young driver I recognised pulled up and I gratefully accepted a lift home for 20 rupees; I gave him 10 and he looked sad and held out his hand so I gave him 10 more which he then kissed, confirming he was overcharging. Dull usual lunch. Before sleeping I swept the room. This morning when I got up I found two cockroaches lying on their backs kicking their feet in the air. So I put a plastic glass over them, slid paper beneath and threw them off the roof.

After a sleep there was a lot of chattering outside; this was one of the staff trying to stop a visitor. I confirmed that I did know this village boy whose name is Sumant so he was allowed in where he handed me a small wrapped biscuit and dropped to his knees to caress my feet. I gave my usual blessing – slightly ruffling his hair and accepting his hugs while the staff man looked on amused. Sumant is the rather vain slim 18yr old who wanted a picture ‘with his darling’ last week in the village. He had come to invite me to Balaji’s engagement event in the Balaji temple down the road [I think]. I said I would come but I think Moin is coming that weekend. He wanted more photos, unself-consciously posing out on the roof before cycling off home on his decrepit bike that he referred to as My jumbojet. After reading on the roof for a bit, feeling sorry for myself with sore throat I forced myself to go for a short walk up to NCC nagar then turning right to go behind the university, the path coming out just behind virology. I took a photo of my banner then followed the pounding beat to the big hall. It was packed to overflowing but I was able to watch from the crowd that was oozing through the door at the entrance. A first year biochemist fought his way to me to invite me to join them but I stayed and took photos and videos of dramatic dance performance by about 10 teenage boys, made possible by holding my camera high in the air and using the hinged viewer on the back – like a periscope. It was really impressive, so I was very pleased to have forced myself to leave my room. The dancers were from Prashanth English Medium High School, G.M.Street, Tata Nagar. As I left the hall I got a message to say that Gopi had just left Chittoor so he should be here in 2 hours. Had nice walk back in dying light past the engineering block where I was seen by Sahir who was just setting out to cycle to evening tuition. Very useful coincidence as I wanted to cancel our arrangement to eat out on Sunday night; I did not feel like chatting and did not want to infect too many friends.

Gopi soon arrived. I did not feel like walking down town and throat was bad so we spent 20 minutes negotiating with staff here to go and get some veggie rice and Singapore noodles from Sindhuri park. It was plain but good. Gopi is getting married to Jayalakshmi in April and he spent a lot of time chatting with her, getting her to send pics on facebook so I could see her. She looks remarkably like Surya’s Saru. Gopi is unchanged in character, just a bit hairier; partly cos he works nights and came from Bangalore direct from work so had no time to shave. I phoned Charlie to cancel out tentative arrangement for lunch as I didn’t want to share my dribbly nose.

Writing this while listening to Paul Lewis playing Beethoven’s Waldstein sonata, Sunday evening..

Sunday 29th January. Had a heavily interrupted sleep with throat and nose etc but little traffic – as usual on early Sunday morning. Sai gopal has sent invites all over the place for me to give lectures in the afternoons on enzymes so I lay snuffling, preparing lectures in my head. Woken by the usual lady with twoteas. Gopi had said that he wanted me to wake him as his father is coming in the early morning but I failed to get any response from the enshrouded body on the spare bed and had both teas myself. They sent breakfast for only one [idli/wada] so Gopi had that and I had a biscuit, presented yesterday by Sumant from Thumulagunta. Had nice morning chat with Gopi until his father arrived. I was not sure what to do with him or what to say as he speaks no English but comes all this way just see me. He has the same handsome handlebar moustache as previously and looks younger than before. We packed him off for his bus to his work place near Chittoor then walked up the road to get Gopi’s bus to Chittoor to visit his family, before returning to Bangalore. The bus stop is just by the Thumulagunta road temple (the Nalaju Kala Mandapam) and some little shops where I bought some crisps for emergencies. Gopi will come again some time so not a sad farewell. Lunch was the usual thing but from a better restaurant, indicated by their use of the recyclable fine jute bags. Read the Hindu on the roof in the cloudy breezy afternoon then slept too long, waking groggy. Panicked and realised that I have to prepare the new lectures so started on that enjoyable job, accompanied by calls of the evening returning crows and the harsh grating chat call of the golden orioles which is a bit like an oriole with a sore throat. The tall slim always smiling Venu came striding over the roof grinning a welcome, after 3 days leave, with a great beaker of scalding tea. Had a nice email from Libby. I had failed to contact Madhu who was planning to get leave from Dubai to visit me and his parents in Chittoor. I later got email from him saying he has failed to get leave. I miss him here. Then a nice chat with Surya who has agreed to take any excess rupees, to use on his visit in March. He gave me directions to a good sandal repair shop on Gandhi road as the inner sole is

disintegrating. My inner soul is more or less sound. *Last movement of the Waldstein sonata is better than medicine.*

I walked the 1 km down to the nearest university entrance to get an auto to Gandhi road. As I paid him there I was surrounded by a gang of teenagers one of whom leapt on me "Uncle you are back – welcome, I think you remember me". Vaguely, when he reminded me that we had chatted somewhere related to cricket. A nice gentle 'nephew' who then introduced me to all his friends. I went to the sandal mender opposite Gogula stores but I forgot it is Sunday so they were closed. I had butter roti and stuffed potato followed by butterscotch ice cream at Sindhuri park; excellent, while reading my faithful kindle. I am reading a paperback novel by Rohinton Mistry so to avoid confusion I am reading Middlemarch on the Kindle; wonderful. Now about to watch the Singing Detective.

Goodnight all.

Monday 30th January. Had a very disturbed night waking due to snorting and coughing. Smiling Venu bought my beaker of tea at 7.0 and I dutifully got up to a grey cloudy day. Went for my usual walk, wearing a necessary vest against the cold which soon become unnecessary as the sun burned away the cloud. I cannot remember seeing much of note but as usual I was glad to have got up. Breakfast of pongal arrived at exactly 8.30 and a driver soon appeared. There were only 5 students, rising to 10. As they were enthusiastic I forced myself to avoid sulking and gave a sparkling lecture on Transcription of DNA to RNA. I estimated 3 sentences per cough. After my inter-lecture tea I wandered around in the sun before my biochemistry lecture, attended as always by all the students so a real pleasure especially as it was my favourite subject – Mitchell's model for ATP synthesis in mitochondria. During the lecture, distant shouts gradually approached and at the climax of a nice chatty story my old friend Murali marched in to announce that there is a bund – strike. Murali was the tall lean tea boy many years ago who became the VC's driver then other positions and is now a main sort of campus union politician man, and portly with it. Of course I did not know the reason for the interruption so I made a show of barging him out of the room to student cheers. He returned and it was obvious I would have to stop. I explained to the students that I had known Murali for more than 10 years and he came up with the sort of cringing bow telling them that I was his great guru. The strike was called state-wide because a statue of Ambedkar had been smashed somewhere in the state. He was the chief writer of the constitution and a special hero of the backward castes as he was the lowest caste. So I walked home through the midday heat to a wonderful lunch prepared by the guest house kitchen for a special event in the grounds. Then a sleep and at 2.30 off to my special lecture on enzymes for postgraduates. Only 7 turned up but that was excellent as they are all very interested and it was worthwhile. After, over tea and biscuits, Sai Gopal explained that he had seen the microbiology students and threatened them with a severe punishment if they did not go to their lectures so I will probably have a full class of sulky students tomorrow. He gave me a lift back and I immediately went for a wander up to ncc nagar but realised I was too tired to go far and so drifted back through an unusually breezy late afternoon to sit in the cool on the roof with twoteas, reading my India history book. Not long after I started to write this, 3 final year biochemistry students turned up; one, a friend from last year (Santosh) asked if he could come but I did not expect him. He came with the very dark Bhaskar and tall Dhananjayulu. I didn't have much voice left but they were a very intelligent pleasant bunch, all planning to do PhD in research institutes. All came from villages so their English was not fluent but they recognised many of the birds in my little bird book. I shoed them out at 7.30 so I could go to dinner. I heard a motorbike soon after and realised I made a mistake as I could have cadged a lift. As it was, I had another long walk all the way down to the far gate where the autos rest if they have nowhere else to go. I mimed to them that I had slogged down from SVU guest house, looking behind me all the time for an auto and now there were 6 of them available. They seemed to like it and ushered me into the one whose turn it was and all chanted 30 rupees only. I went to Gandhi road in another attempt to get my sandals repaired on a stitch in time basis. I went into a big well-lit shop and asked if they did repairs "no sir you must go to that fellow" who was crouched in the road in the entrance with a cobbler's last and bits of leather and rubber etc. he had some thickish foamy stuff for that job but it would take 30 minutes so I left it and looked in other shoe shops but only one did repairs and it would need the whole day to do it so I looked at replacements; there was one that was ok but I decided to leave it till later.

Had Sindhuri park dinner of kadu gobi , butter roti, strawberry icecream then home by auto. Exhausted. Collapsed and watched 2nd instalment of Dennis Potter's The Singing Detective, said by many to be the best thing ever made for TV. Wonderful. It takes a lot of willpower to ration myself to one instalment per night.

Tuesday 31st January. *I am writing this at 6.30 in evening while an electrician is fitting a replacement tubelight over the basin. Just over 2 weeks to achieve this.*

Had much better night last night, only waking once. Felt much better, especially after Venu's beaker of tea. Got up slowly and prepared today's lectures. Idli/Wada. It comes in a jute bag containing a small round plastic box containing red spicy soup with onion, pepper and tomato, with usual assorted leaves, peppercorns etc. then a small newspaper parcel wrapped tied up with very fine string. As a joke I started collecting this, tying it all together and winding on a bit of card. For some reason it never tangles. I spread out the square of newspaper to reveal two banana leaves; between them is the grey gunge with a lot of coconut in it, which is revealed by sliding the two banana leaves apart. On top are two idlis and a wada. The idlis are made from ground rice. They are broken and put in the soup or just dipped. The wada is a small ring doughnut with sweetish batter and bits embedded in it of peppercorns and unidentifiable things; this is also dipped in the too-spicy soup. When fresh and warm it is ok but not appetising when cold. The class was much fuller than usual, a result of Sai gopal's threatening the microbiologists with serious punishment if they did not attend all my lectures. Started Transcription; very enjoyable and the students did not seem to resent the threat. After my 30 minute tea break wandered into biochemistry where I met a lot of final year students who had been good friends last year. Then completion of my Peter Mitchell lecture. I would really like to go straight back but I have to go to Murthi's office [he is now head of departments] for tea and biscuits. Fortunately I met Dhananjayulu, the tall thin student from last night, and he offered a lift back on his motorbike. A good driver and his delighted smile made me pleased I had asked him. He told me to always call him if I need a lift. I may do that when I have no energy to go to town.

The hot water has been very temperamental [?temperatural] so I was pleased that it obeyed me and let me have a prolonged 'bucket shower' and then washed shirts etc before lunch which was usual veg rice and dahl [?dull]. I am still reading Darwin for lunch; really enjoying it, especially as he has now got onto natural selection. I don't know why he is not more often directly quoted.

I am writing this while waiting for flute Charlie who phoned earlier to say that "we are coming to bring you dinner this evening at 7.30". This was probably a response to me cancelling lunch on Sunday cos of cold.

After lunch had a nice sleep, happily interrupted by a call from Libby to say that it is minus 3 degrees there and that she was crawling back into bed. I responded by turning up the fan. Sai Gopal then collected me to take me to my enzyme lectures only to find an empty lecture room. We sat and chatted and after 15 minutes the same group as yesterday arrived. Very enjoyable lecture/seminar. Followed by tea and drive back with SG. I immediately set off for a walk to the dairy farm only to be stopped by the level crossing, for a very long goods train. I made a video of it and of the traffic as it was released. I had waited there beside the road near a school bus with some boys on it who I had seen previously near Lokesh's house last year. They all yelled and called me over amongst the packed autos and bikes which then tried to run me over as the barrier lifted. As previously the wall across the dairy farm was a positive thing as 2 hoopoes spend a lot of time running up and down it. Very nice setting sun stroll back to guest house. The barrier had just lifted as I reached the railtracks and I was met by packed buses and jeeps and autos, mixed with motorbikes [multiple occupancy] and of course bicycles. I met 6 people I knew in the short walk to the guest house; 2 staff from microbiology, a boy from Thumulagunta, a madman who stops me every day and asks how is UK, my nice teaboy Venu who asked by signing if I wanted him to turn around amidst the chaos and give me a lift back {I urged him on his way } and finally Sahir, my young civil engineer friend who came swerving over the road to ask if my cold is better [I had cancelled our Sunday dinner plan with him]. He was on his way, as always to tuition.

Back on to roof to check photos and read India history to the sound of homeward crows. Perhaps Venu's signs to me were to say that he was returning because he soon turned up with his smile and teabeaker. A rare mosquito and electrician arrived together so I moved in to my room to keep him company [the

electrician] while downloading my pictures, answer emails and start on diary. I now have a light to lighten my dirty laundry cupboard.

As planned, Charlie arrived at exactly 7.30, with a friend Kumar, and Teena and Steven who was wearing a scarlet New York Police Department T shirt with POLICE written across the back. Steven was carrying a huge bag with my dinner in tiffin tins, enough for everyone but they had had part of their dinner already and were going back to finish it. So I had to sit there eating puris and chicken biryani and lovely veg curry with the promise (threat) of grapes and orange to follow. While the others sat in a semicircle watching, I ate about half of what was provided washed down with fluorescent orange Fanta. Then out on the roof to point my magic green laser at the moon and then out with the binoculars to see moon craters. I have just waved them off on 2 motorbikes with promises to visit soon. Teena had brought 3 silver medals she won at school sports day for 80 m and 50 m running. So that Steven was not put too much into the shade Charlie told me that his school exam marks have gone up from 43% to 82%. He is now in a better English medium school. Charlie claims the £20 I left for them to help with children's school books etc are the only reason for this success. Steven is much less shy and gave me the impression that he likes me to be there; I was never certain on visits last year. So pleased to be sitting here without the need to go to town for dinner.

Wednesday 1st February. Had a horrible night with noseblowing coughing etc. No walk. Quite a big group for 9.00 lecture. Then wandered about and did a bit of preparation for the 11.0 lecture to 1st year biochemists which was as usual a pleasure, especially as it was on a favourite topic Mitchell's Q cycle. Tomorrow is my last lecture with them so I made a big thing of inviting them to the guest house. I then asked if anyone had a bike to give me a lift back. The only response being from my favourite lady. Some boys followed us out to where the bikes sit and I heard Telugu chat with the word Brakes in English. I asked if this meant the brakes are bad "yes sir of course". One of the boys took the keys and he drove me on a scooter. One of the problems is the speed bumps which are steep, sometimes more like logs. Worse, at the edge of the road it is flat so bikers aim at the edges, regardless of the side of the road so you get bikes playing 'chicken' hurtling towards each other, diving off to the side at the last minute. I sat and read in the sun until usual dull lunch, the best part being the curds with added decaying banana. Then a sleep until woken to go to my enzyme seminar. I changed the time yesterday from 2.30 to 2.40 as that was the time they arrived. Only 2 came [at 2.50] but they were enthusiastic so I gave a chat on enzyme purification. One of them was a research assistant who works in PURSE building and the other a new lecturer in the Pharmacy bit of Biochemistry. Abdul Althaj. He is doing a part time PhD in VIT at Vellore, the college where Ram did his first MSc. He gave me a lift back on his new Yamaha bike and then came in for tea. He was appointed lecturer by the SVU but the coordinator is Thyagaraju who I used to respect; I now learn that he is trying to get Abdul removed for no real reason except that he has known the family [father is a philosophy professor] for many years. He has forbidden Abdul to use biochemistry department equipment. Crazy place [but see later for real story]. After he left I went for a short stroll up towards NCC nagar and met a large gang of rather uncouth youth coming from there; one stopped to chat and told me they are all students of NCC college. *Now back here thinking it is time to go to dinner.*

I had the usual long walk down to the autos then direct to Sindhuri park where they were taking the god[ess] for evening ride around the tank, encouraged by a dense crowd sitting all around on the steps going down to the water. As the floating goddess approaches they stand up and wave hands in a sort of religious way while I point the camera. Always a cheering site; made videos and tried to get impressive pictures – we shall see. After a struggle I crossed the road to go into the cool silent marble and brass foyer of the hotel where I had a south indian thali – steel dish lined with banana leaf with 12 dishes inside it and a chapatti and rice ad lib. The light was poor and the thali needed a bit of manipulation so did not progress far with Middlemarch; Dorothy is now engaged to Casaubon the cold scholar vicar. After, I wandered around to the side of the tank where the elephants were patiently waiting [actually probably desparate with boredom] and blessing people with their trunks. All this on the edge of a busy dark street, seething with pilgrims, bikes, autos and and locals with their children. I tried to get a little video of this but was spotted by a gang of lively young teenagers who did the usual interrogation, with background hooting and temple music and noisy chatter. Then of course they wanted photo. When I tried to go I made the mistake of indicating this by shaking hands with the leader, then

all the others had to do this. I confess I do like this street entertainment. I tried to get an auto by the station and he asked for 70 rupees so I walked away. He then did what the old cycle rickshaw wallahs did – came up alongside calling a lower fare; 60, no; 50 no then hit his roof held up 4 fingers and waved him away. So he pulled in and stopped in front with a big grin and waved me inside accepting the correct fare of 40 rupees. So here I am again. I am now going to break into a new bar of chocolate and watch The Singing Detective. Goodnight all.

Thursday 2nd February. Interrupted night; not too bad. Woke early and saw the sun was not obscured on top of the hills by cloud so forced myself to get up for usual morning NCC nagar walk. Wonderful morning full of birds – especially tailor bird, orioles, bulbuls, singing magpie robins, partridges, coucal, kingfishers, leafbirds, koils, mynahs, doves,. I suddenly realised that I must hurry to get back to meet my 8.30 breakfast deadline. I was then overtaken by small yellow school bus which pulled in a short way ahead of me. Out jumped 6 small boys in blue uniform “one photo with bus sir”. OK. Then all ran and piled back in and off it went with a wave from the driver. Breakfast was late so I quickly stuffed a wada and one idli down while the driver sat watching, then off to my lecture on regulation of gene expression. Most of the students were there but not my 2 special biochemistry student girls. So I waited a bit then told the others that I would go and get them. As soon as I was out the door they arrived waving their watch which was 10 minutes slow. Between lectures I went to Sai Gopal’s room. He had just come the 8 hour bus ride from his village; he had to go there for the funeral of his mother in law or auntie. I told him what Abdul had told me yesterday so he then told me the truth. Abdul had done the Pharmacy course here [part of biochemistry dept.]. He then wrote to the university to say that Thyagaraju, the coordinator did not know that subject and that all the biochemists were bad teachers and that he, Abdul, should be made coordinator. He got many other students to sign the letter by telling them that they would get better marks when he became coordinator. Thyagaraju instantly and honourable resigned so the university could investigate. Abdul had been put up to this by his father, a retired professor of philosophy. There was a huge university fuss and VC and a top panel re-instated Thyagaraju who reasonably does not want Abdul in his department and wants to get rid of him. Sai Gopal agrees that Abdul is a nice enough man but is completely misguided [by father] about how to behave.

My biochemistry lecture was the last one to that group so we had a little farewell with small speech by Murthy and presentation of garland, shawl and gaudy picture. They are a really attractive lot of students so I made a fuss that they should soon come to visit and it was arranged they would come this evening at 5.00; they have to be back in hostel by 6.30. One of the boys [Munjanath; tall thin dark glasses village] drove me back nervously on his old bike then came in for a chat. Had dull usual lunch, the climax being packet curd mixed with squares of milk chocolate. Then short sleep and lift back to my afternoon research lecture. By 3.00 I had 7 in the group, all enthusiastic research scholars, so I gave an enthusiastic lecture on my early research to illustrate the basic enzymology that I had been describing. Got a lift back then rushed about to tidy room and sweep it for my visitors. That gave me enough time to sit for 20 minutes on the roof with Venu’s beaker of tea while reading history. The girls phoned to check it was ok to come but they were in traffic and the noisy long hooting train came by so I had to say “just say yes or no – are you coming to guest house”; got a noisy giggling yes sir. They soon turned up, my usual two – the small smiling attractive girl and her black covered muslim friend, plus 4 others. We organised chairs and wall for seats then had exhausting enjoyable question answer session with photos and secret videos, followed by pics of family. Like cinderellas they suddenly got up to hurry home before 6.30 so I walked with them a little way down the road. They had seen my 1982 pictures with usual appreciative screams “you were so cute then sir”, followed by explanations and apologies “but now sir of course you are so handsome and also so wise”. I introduced them as my girlfriends to Venu who said “sir if they are your friends then they must also be my friends”; help yourself. I walked with them down to the teashop where I was attacked by little Subbaiah who then walked back to guest house. I persuaded him to go so I could ‘take rest’. After three 60 minute lectures and so many long chats my throat is so dry and a bit sore. So I will go alone to Sindhuri park then direct back here.

As often happens I set out without enthusiasm then have memorable time. I walked half way to univ entrance and got auto direct to Sindhuri park. For some reason there was much more traffic than usual. Had

ok stuffed aloo [potato thing] and butter roti followed by butterscotch icecream. The festival at the tank was going on again but had finished when I got out. I tried to get auto direct back but very dense traffic meant I could not get across the road so walked through temple area where the 2 elephants had set up their stall, blessing pilgrims with their trunks. I was just trying to get small video of that and the same boys as last night appeared "you remember me sir, you chatted last night". They were all much cleaner and neater in the brighter light and their English was unusually good. They warned me not to use flash near the elephant so I moved them around to take photos. They were remarkably good at chatting and very keen that I meet them tomorrow; the festival is continuing for a few more days. Then wanted my phone number; I gave them my card then they got interested in website and wanted me to put their photos on it. Names: Akhil Siva; Jyothesh veera sai; sanhar, kiran, khateel, munendra. *One of them has just phoned to ask me to come tomorrow so I can meet his parents.* At last I managed to escape and walked down Gandhi road to Nethaji road for an auto home. Goodnight.

Friday 3rd February. Not a bad night but still disturbed by snuffling. As I had no 11.00 lecture today I decided to fester with my beaker of Venu's tea and finish my book: Rohan Mistry's *Such a long journey*. My driver was 10 minutes late so I got a little applause as I came in late; amazingly everyone else was on time. Enjoyable lecture on the lactose operon. My three most loyal attendees are Lalitha, the lively attractive biochemistry student, her black dressed muslim friend, Bhanu and the boy from virology Manohan. After I sneaked into the office and poured my own tea I quickly got a lift home, rested for 10 minutes then went for a walk in the cool breeze to the dairy farm where I did a reverse circuit so sun would not be in my eyes. Got nice pics of roller and prinia and paddy bird. There was a lot of cloud and strong breeze so very nice atmosphere. Did an Englishman and sat in the sun on the roof before lunch. Because of timetabling I have done that rarely since the students returned. Lunch was better than usual, partly cos it came on time so I had it relatively hot and partly in good mood I think. After a sleep I went to my afternoon enzymology lecture which is now on my research. Each day more students come but when I ask questions I find that they do not understand the question and they do not know much about biochemistry. At the end I tried to find out if it was useful or not and should I continue next week or stop. There was the usual confused silence and when prodded the only answer I got was stop. That's me in my place. I was then called into the PURSE office by Sai Gopal's minions and introduced to a visiting speaker; an Indian returned from USA. When I, as a courtesy I asked about his work he told me more than I wanted; very intense man. He had worked on HIV vaccine and assumed that I knew everything about it launching into information on P42 location etc. This was enough to dampen my duty – I had intended going to his lecture. On the way out the biochemically trained research fellow came up with a friend who was more confident in English to check whether he had understood. He had not. They want me to continue. When I told the others that he had said I should stop they were horrified and amused and explained everything; so I continue. I decided to walk back but by the Annapurna canteen where Subbaiah came rushing out Chris Chris. He is the small research student who looks a bit like Charlie chaplain. He got very fond of me when a younger student and was given to me all wrapped up as a present to take whom at the end of that year's visit. He then insisted on giving me a lift back to guesthouse which was good. I sorted photos then sat on roof and read Indian history. Then shortish walk up toward NCC. Soon chased by 2 boys for photo. One was the boy who I saw at the guest house the other day and I remembered his name Srinivasulu; "your name is creeesh sir". I followed some students who were aiming through the brush toward a cricket area near the engineering hostel and found myself at Viswakarma hostel, Sahir's hostel but I was told what I guessed, that he had gone for tuition. Not a waste of time as I now know how to get there and also I know where the crows return to roost every night.

During my peaceful walk I tried to phone home but got the answering machine; I think this is weekend of the brothers tour. Then Vinay to confirm that he is coming tomorrow; 5.30 am. I hope that is Indian time. He is leaving at 11.15 Sunday night so I will have problem to find things to do; perhaps the zoo or Kapilatheertham. I was invited to Charlie's so perhaps I should take him there. Moin is coming the following weekend which leaves no time for Edwin which is sad but it is so difficult to get here perhaps he will be

pleased. During my walk I phoned madhu as it is Friday and a holiday for him but he was in his office. Very sad that he is not coming to see me, but they would not give him leave "What to do, what to do Chris".

After writing diary till 7.00 I set out for Sindhuri park dinner. An occupied auto very soon pulled up and I was asked where to. They said get in so I got lift immediately. I paid usual rupees so perhaps the 1st occupant, who climbed out the wrong side at the town club traffic lights, got free ride. I don't look forward to dinner except the icecream, strawberry tonight. All the activity in the tank had died away when I came out so I wandered into temple area where yesterday's boys had demanded to meet me. Soon after I started to wander down they all appeared again. The elephants and god were due to arrive soon so I stood waiting for video. The first sign of them were a group of ladies doing a sort of war dance with sticks. This was followed by a dozen men in yellow doing what looked almost exactly like a morris dance. All the time while filming the boys were trying to chat. Then the elephants who always move too fast, followed by the god on his huge heavy platform. The god went home and the elephants took up their blessing place. The boys then all wanted a photo with me in it so gave a lot of instruction to the boy they all said wanted to be a scientist. It is ok. Their ages are 14-16 and they say they are all in same class and are best friends. One wanted to be scientist, and there was a pilot, engineer, and a load of others I did not catch. They are very keen to visit guest house so I said come at 5.00 on Sunday but phone first. One of them phoned this morning and did not say much cos his father grabbed the phone and just said hello heloo hellooo. The boy explained his father thought he was too disrespectful to phone a professor – seen on my card. They are a class or two above my village friends as they are well dressed and speak fair English. I tried to set off for home but they decided to keep me company as far as Gandhi road. As I arrived at the nethaji road junction a dormant auto sprang to life and lurched across the road to my side; the driver leaned over and said SVU guest house 30 rupees? So here to write this before another instalment of singing detective. Hugh just rang to say he and libby are now at Ben's. the weather is very cold there -6 and the forecast is more snow. Sounds nice. Sahir [civil engineer] phoned to say he will be in Chandrigiri for week end but wants to visit next week. Good night

Saturday 4th February. *I am writing this in the evening while listening to Janet baker singing mahler Kindertotenlieder.* What a day. I was woken in the middle of a nasty dream by knocking at 5.30 am. I was looking at a folio society book of Hugh's and someone had spilt tea on every page [meaning?]. The knocker was Vinay come by bus from Bangalore. Sai gopal should have booked him a room apparently. Vinay persuaded them to let him have a room which was ready by 6.0. Then tea then vinay. He is unchanged except for more tummy fat which he is trying to remove by going to gym. He is still almost silent. I had pongal for breakfast and he had idli/wada. Then off to my lecture at 8.45 on a lovely sunny morning. I see the temperature in Southampton last night was minus 9. I hope Libby/Hugh brother tour is not made too stressful by it. Had a nice lecture then back to vinay. We went for a walk up to NCC nagar and went into the living area itself, ushered past guard at gate who said please go there is lots of military people. It was cadets getting marching instruction etc. After the usual dull lunch I 'took rest' as instructed. After an hour sleep I did not go and get vinay, but stole an extra time looking at emails and reading. At 4 we went by auto to Thumulagunta but most of boys were still at school. Saw Balaji's parents, excited about his engagement function up in the temple in the hills tomorrow. So we went for a walk to the larger part of the village. I have not been there for many years and of course it has changed, with many big new houses mixed with the village houses, and buffalo chewing the cud. The fields between the 2 parts of the village are filling up with posh houses and the two long low chicken sheds have been converted into lots of small rooms for village people. The chicken wire has remained. There is a large new modern temple there. As I am not known we received a lot of stares. Behind the village there used to be a large area, often under water, with a long high bank around it leading out to the bypass. This has now been paved so forms a nice place to walk in the evening breeze. We walked most of the long length of it then back into the smaller part of the village by the back route. No one seemed to be around so we were about to leave when we saw some function at the end of one of the roads that led to their small temple. One of the boys saw us in the distance so came running up, leading a stampede away from the function [a team from another university educating about drug addiction and aids]. I had the camera on so switched to video so got nice film of my welcome. Of course the girls to tried to spoil it be sticking their hands

and faces over the camera [I have trained the boys to be careful and well behaved]. Eventually many of my old friends were there but not Mounish or more important, last year's leader, my friend Barath. My new friend from last week made a great fuss of me culminating in a sweet little kiss. During one photoshoot they formed a pyramid on the leader's bike. Eventually Barath arrived and stood quietly on the side. He had his arm in a rough sling under his jacket. Very pleased that I remembered his name. At the last minute Bobby arrived then dashed off on the back of a friend's bicycle. We eventually got away and fortunately found an auto so back for welcome tea. Later went to Sindhuri park for dinner and stroll back through temple area. I think I exhausted vinay who soon went off to his room to sleep. I have just looked at my emails. Edwin is coming in the middle of the week on 14th – very good news. Amazing email from Chris Warman, asking if I am the chris he remembers who used to set fire to his (own) hair and who gave him lifts on his motorbike and played him the seasons and gave him sherry. Well I am. He is a boy from a poor family in Reading who was in the boys brigade and always dressed so smartly. Good night.

Sunday 5th February. *Writing this in the evening while Vinay is paying for his room before going back to town to get his bus home to Bangalore.*

I had usual disturbed night but as I expect it and as I go to sleep soon after waking, and sometimes after a read, then I don't mind. Woken by teas at 6.50. then at 8.0 lokanardh arrived with one idli/wada. Instructions are never passed on from evening to morning staff. I wasn't hungry so Vinay had it and I had a biscuit or two. Chowdappa had arranged for a car for us for the day which was very generous but it meant I had to think of something to do with it. It arrived at 9.15; Indycar Vista, new with polythene over all seats. Very nice and very nice driver. We went to the zoo park and found as usual things had changed; the rough parking area is now a comfortable sort of picnic area. We arrived about 9.45 as it started to heat up. Vinay was wearing heavy jeans and long sleeve shirt and wool sweater. He did agree with me by lunchtime that perhaps a T shirt would have been enough. As always he does not say much so is a bit exhausting. They have somehow arranged the lions in a sort of safari park. This would mean an hour in a hot bus so I told Vinay to go and I would wait. No sir I am here to be with you. He thinks it strange that I spent most of the time looking for native birds. I saw a paradise flycatcher with it wonderful long white tail looping through the trees but failed to get photo. I got a couple of good pictures, out of 20 taken, of a white fantail at last. It is always a nice atmosphere in the zoo. There were a few bikes and small buses with swarms of school children in scarlet uniforms, all happy to climb over the barriers and throw sticks at the bears. We were hot and tired so were pleased we had a nice car to take us into town by way of Kapilatheertham. The entrance to the temple from the road was packed with buses and jeeps so it would not be a peaceful place to visit and we drove on to Bliss 3star hotel for excellent lunch of chicken 65 and milk shakes. Chicken 65 is on other restaurant menus but no one can tell what this is; they said chicken is killed after 65 days. Then a cool clean quiet trip back through bypass bit of town to guest house and 2 hours sleep. It was too much so I felt groggy. After tea we used the car to take us past thumulagunta and the bypass out into the unspoilt countryside which is as nice as ever. With paddy and corn and sugarcane and cows and cowherders and the distant hills. Many parakeets and doves and drongos. AND big flocks of rosy starlings – not seen for a few years. Had a nice chat with a boy looking after cows. It turned out that he was doing some diploma at university. Very keen that I should come again to chat in his field. His mum and dad and cows then strolled over to chat some more. Vinay speaks a little Telugu so we stumble along. Fortunately when we got to bypass there was an auto to take us home. Almost immediately Sumanth arrived to take me to Balaji's engagement function. I said I could not go and he said it is only to take one photo and come back. He had told me it was at Balaji temple [in hills - the main place at Tirumula 17km up winding mountain road] so we will go on his motorbike. I escaped by lending him my small camera and off he went a bit upset. It was only after he had gone that I realised I should have got vinay to confirm that it really was up in the hills and not just down the road. I hope our instructions were good enough for some good photos. After sad hugs Sumant went off. We looked at the bird photos taken today then took car all way to Sindhuri park for gobi Manchurian and other stuff. Then car home. It is more like watching TV to sit in that car and drive down Gandhi road, insulated from heat and noise and dust and fun. I pleaded exhaustion and damaged voice to write this while vinay watched a movie on his phone. He has just gone so I can go to sleep. Good night.

Monday 6th February. *Writing this at 6 in evening while waiting for Sumanth to return with my small camera, and then Sunil who is now better, and due to come here at 8.0. I think I have made a bad mistake. Sumant told me the engagement function was in balaji temple. Everyone knows there is only one balaji temple – the famous one in the hills; certainly not for visiting by motorbike. Today I learned there is another balaji temple – in Thumulagunta itself. I feel very bad; it is another example of poor communication where people assume I will just obey without explaining. My fault really in this case but I do not know why Balaji did not tell me himself.*

Woke at 6.30 and tea at 6.50 so forced myself to go for morning walk which again was the right thing to do. Not many birds partly cos there were more people and tractors around than usual. One of my best places is where they dig out the red sandy soil and cart it away in tractors. They had been active early and drove birds away from my usual path. Had to rush back for breakfast which was idli/wada which was good as I was hungry. Very small group of students for the arabinose operon – only 3 microbiologists. I later learned that this was because they had to do some admin things in their hostel and that was at 9.00. This really is a poor arrangement. I would argue to change it except that the 3 keenest students are not in microbiology and they can only come at 9. After a quick tea rushed back for nice time washing clothes then sitting in the sun preparing tomorrow's lecture on regulation of lambda phage; very complicated but fun to lecture. *I am writing this while listening to Tosca with Tito Gobbi and Maria Callas. That reminds me I must go and get my Gobi Manchurian. Sunil has just sent text to say his fever has returned so he will not be coming so I will go to town.*

Lunch was a new low. It came at 12.00 instead of 1.00 and was just a newspaper packet of banana leaves holding usual veg pullao but no dal or curry. I stuffed some down and had yesterday's packet of curds that Vinay had ignored. It was ok as I augmented it with shortbread and chocolate. After sleeping I got prepared for afternoon research chat but no driver came. Instead Prof Balaji from Biochemistry came with a request that I stay an extra few days [10 actually] to take part in a Botany department conference. The organiser asked him because he had known me since he was an MSc student. He reminisced about my lectures and how they all still remember that I took all 12 of them to dinner. As no driver had come from the PURSE centre to take me for my afternoon research chat Balaji drove me there but the lecture room was closed and only one student Pennendra was there [he worked in the next room]. So I sulked and said I would walk back. As I passed the canteen three biochemistry lecturers [Reddy, Appa Rao and Thyagaraju] stopped me for a chat; they said I looked like a one man army walking rapidly through the campus. At the entrance to the engineering students hostels there was a water melon seller with a gang of students so asked the way to Sahir's room so of course one of the took me there. He was probably the only one on campus who was working but he was pleased I had come and we had a nice chat which cheered me up, then short walk back to guest house. The main road had road closed signs across the road so I went in and got camera and walked up the road to find that a large mob of workers were doing some work to the track of the level crossing. Pedestrians could, with difficulty, find a way across. As I reached the opposite side the crossing keeper called out for his photo and to offer tea which I politely refused as I wanted to get on. I went for a slow stroll round the housing estate bordering the Thumulagunta road, behind the temple, where I was asked to take a photo of a little girl playing on a heap of sand. I did not like to say that I had already surreptitiously ?? taken it so took others and also her father/uncle who was a professional ironer. To avoid stumbling through the road/rail works I went down the small road on other side of track and then up onto the track for a nice walk towards town in the evening setting sun. I had assumed that the railway was not working so got a surprise when an approaching train blasted me off the track. I eventually slumped back into my room and had just enough will to wash my feet before sitting out for the final half hour of the day with twoteas. I used my leatherman tool to extract two huge thorns from my sandals [about ¾ inch]. They are falling apart but I think a couple of stitches might help them to last the next two weeks. I had intended to go early to town and get that done and then get back in time for Sunil to come. But I could not go until 6.30 as Sumant said he was bringing the camera back then. I did not feel like plodding down town for dinner and sunil sent a txt to say that his fever had returned so he was not coming. I then felt a bit sorry for myself, having no one to go to dinner with. I could not face the town so ate an orange [left over from Trident hotel] with side order of shortbread biscuits. Then after writing diary a little I walked all the way

down to the student hostels. Eventually room 325 was found by a helpful passing student, and then the usual tiring chatter but with a couple of useful English speakers. One is Sreekanth who is also a singer. Another is RKB Baradwaj [he later gave me a shorter name of Karthik]; he is the light skinned very thin student who always looked interested in lectures but who had to go to his home when he got a fever. There was one rather grotesque fat black boy who acted as the class clown but I did not like him. I was dragged next door by a geography student who wanted a photo of me in his room, especially one standing next to a big picture of Jesus. I got out my camera eventually and took poor photos and little video of them larking about singing a popular film song. When I left they all [10] came all the way back to my room, with much singing on the way, where I could lie on my bed. A new student joined us on the march back; a biotechnology student called Denesh, fair and slim, wearing a lungi and quietly spoken in good English [sounds like the Sunday paper bride/groom supplement]. It was bliss to slump on my bed while they all found themselves sitting places. Two of the boys paired up on one chair and wanted a sentimental photo together [we are best friends sir] then Karthick and another followed suit and Denesh came and lay down on the bed next to me [to acquire special blessing from you sir, my new friend]. So from feeling a bit sad earlier in the evening I seem to have acquired a load of new friends. There were very good reasons why they were not at my lecture today and all swore they would be there tomorrow. I hope they are as I spent at least half an hour on the roof this morning struggling to understand my notes on lambda phage. On the walk home I had a welcome text from libby and hugh to say they are safely home after a very successful trip. Feeling a bit hungry and tired so to bed at midnight.

Tuesday 7th February. Because the road is blocked at the train crossing, and down at balaji colony we had a silent night so I slept from 12 till 7.0 when woken for teas. It took great willpower to get up and go for walk and as usual it was worth it. There was a lot of cloud but it was not blanket cloud and gradually the sun took over. Went up by NCC Nagar but cannot remember much except at one point standing in one place for 5 minutes, seeing partridges, coppersmith, drongo, sunbirds, bulbuls, doves, bee-eaters, robins, all coming to show off. I had to hurry back but tiffin had not arrived even at 8.40; when it came a couple of minutes later the bearer was very apologetic for being late; the road is closed, as I discovered later today, at balaji colony so there was a problem. Anyway it was hot idli/wada and I had no dinner last night so it was very good.

After last night I expected a large crowd but only usual ones plus 2, so fewer than 10 for my brilliant lecture on lambda phage. Had a nice chat over tea with the student working on chikunkunya [?] virus then back to room to have bathe and wash towel etc. then half an hour in hot sun preparing next 2 lectures. Lunch was usual but tolerable, eaten while reading Middlemarch. Then an hour sleep and change into clean shirt for arrival of Moin's father from their home in Tadpatri; 6 hours on train to Renigunta then auto from there. A very nice man who is the station manager at Tadpatri rail station. His father had also worked there. His English was good and had really nice chat. Of course he wanted my opinion of Moin – not only his science sir but also his character and other features of life as he must not only do work in his life. I could hardly say that it is obvious he is perfect because I have him as my best friend here but I managed to come up with something. I received an invitation to his wedding – not now sir in about 4 or 5 years time. His train was due at 4.30 so I said he should set off at 3.45 as it is not always easy to get auto; he said he could walk it in 30 minutes [not true] but I insisted on coming with him till he caught a shared auto.

I sorted bird photos then at 4.45 set out on an evening stroll along the rail track past Tirupati West to the place where I first saw the church. It is still there but surrounded by other buildings and cell phone masts. Where the track went over a bridge over the road I followed a path to clamber and slither down. When it was too late I found I had to wade through a small rubbish heap with mattresses and bits of dead chicken. The road comes out at the Balaji colony traffic lights where there was a barrier to stop traffic going up toward guest house and rail crossing. One side [entering town] was open and occasional autos and bikes filtered through. I set off walking on that side and soon got an auto, indicating to him that he should get to other side to get me to guest house. I assumed he would go down the road 100 yards and turn but he turned into the path of oncoming traffic and we went up on the wrong side of the road. There was still time when we got back to enjoy my roof time. I can stay later than previously as there are no mosquitoes. I phone around to the students who came last night to find someone to go to dinner with. Denesh sent a text to say he is away. Two others

answered but I could not understand them. One person did not know who I am then I learned later that he was the father of Sreekanth who phoned later to say he is coming and he arrived 5 minutes later. We went to Sindhuri park by way of Gandhi road where the nice friend of Surya's in Gogula stores took me to a little man by the side of the road to get my sandal mended. One strap is held on with only a couple of threads. He did a thorough job all the time muttering angrily. When he finished he just tossed it into the road. He asked for 10 rupees so I gave him 20 [25p]. wonderful. It was the last day of the festival at the tank. We walked through the temple area but did not see my friends there. Sreekanth is a nice student with good English but he has a rather high pitched voice that is a bit of a strain after a while. He told me that he and Karthik are both Brahmins and strict vegetarians. He kept telling me his hopes to study ways of using bacteria to remove heavy metals from soil; this was usually in heavy traffic so I could only grunt meaningless replies. Just had email to tell me that Edwin is coming next week but for one day only. I shall now watch a film and then to well-deserved rest. In fact I tried to watch Wilde's Lady Windermere's Fan but kept falling asleep so gave up at 10.30 to sleep.

Wednesday 8th February. *Writing this at 6.30 after an exhausting afternoon. The noisy staff are all chat/shouting under my window. The fan is fast and I am in shorts.*

I had a disturbed night for no obvious reason. Woken at 7.00 by Venu who seems to accept that the door will be opened by a blurry-eyed wild haired man in boxers and comes in smiling with a big beaker of tea [his version of my twoteas policy]. Then a head wobbling hug. I saw that it was already a clear soontobesunny day so stayed up, cooled the tea by indian tea-pouring ceremony then off for a walk in the forest beyond NCC nagar lake. No pictures but a beautiful summer morning. Saw beautiful golden oriole flying through the trees and then a treepie and a bird I haven't seen this year previously, black headed shrike. Lokesh's family saw me coming and went in to get baby for a photo; lokesh is back but could not stay to chat as had to get back for tiffin which was usual idli wada but hot and very welcome as my masala dosa last night was not very filling. No one at my lecture at nine so went to meet Bhanu and Lalitha and Manohar then joined us. I told a few stories of my research [at their request] while another 6 students arrived, including Sreekanth, but few of the other students who had promised to come. Then gave my favourite lecture on the difficult part of regulation of lambda phage. I went to find Sai gopal for chat then back to PURSE building to get a lift back. It is getting warmer and the scooter ride back is bliss. Prepared lectures in the sun and cleaned up room a bit before lunch; the usual but a bit warmer AND some fish, brought by Moin's father in a small sealed plastic box. It was of course spicy and grilled, like miniature swordfish steaks. Finished with curds mixed with the gulab? Also brought by him. Slept for an hour then off to test whether I can use my laptop with projector in the PURSE building. Sorting this out took the usual hour with 5 experts leaning over and typing stuff. They crashed the computer twice and scrambled my already confused desktop screen. I got them to find another laptop to prove it was not mine that was the problem. Eventually a real expert arrived and put the cable into the correct place on the projector and all was well. A couple of the girls had been asking about family etc so I showed them some pictures. After tea with sai gopal, during which he had 5 phone calls and at least 6 visitors, I got lift back to guest house where I sat on the roof with Venu's teabeaker and read wonderful novel called Six Suspects, by Vikas Swarup the writer of QI (Slumdog millionaire). It was very tempting to just sit in the cooling evening but Sumanth has not returned my small camera yet so I went to Thumulagunta by auto. This was partly because I wanted it and partly because it was so hot I had not the courage to go for a walk.

As usual action is better than inaction and I had a wonderful time. As soon as I got into the village my special friend Barath appeared. He had damaged his shoulder and his arm was in a grubby sling and he was holding a grubby towel around him. He had been there on my last visit but was either bored or shy. It seems to be the latter as this time he took me over, leading me to say hello to his brother outside his house and then to Balaji's house where I gratefully slumped onto the concrete seat outside with my invalid friend cuddled up beside me. When I asked him about his arm he was silent but a nice little girl with good English joined us as translator for the rest of the visit. She said that he fell off his bike but others all said his father had beat him. I met his aggressive [drunk I think] father later so it is plausible. Fortunately balaji had a professional photographer at the engagement ceremony at the village temple so I was shown some pics on TV and felt very relieved. I was then led around the village to meet more relatives of Barath and the girl [honey shree], pictures

of babies being insisted upon. I now have loads of photos of village life including auntie beating some clothes to death or cleanliness on the concrete road; then two boys wresting a dog; then one of the girls came running up with a kid goat in her arms that was passed from one to the other for photos. All the tie chickens are running under our feet and buffalo wandering past. We ended up in Barath's house where I was shown where he slept; he indicated a corner of a double bed that more or less filled one room. He looks about ten but is fourteen. Then he did a good job by mime inviting me to stay and eat and to sleep there. I pleaded another arrangement at university and was allowed to leave. After much complicated debate I got them to write the full address of the house so I can send pics later. I was then escorted to the road where they tried to flag down an auto; failing that they stopped a young chap on a motorbike who is from the village and directed him to take me home which he did, necessarily the long way around as the road is still closed.

I have nearly recovered so I better go and have dinner in Sindhuri park.

Just back; writing while drinking my british airways Shiraz.

I got an auto immediately so went as far only as Gandhi road then strolled down garland road (Bazaar street) and around the back of the temple, an area that I used to know when Surya lived in adjacent Nethaji road. Had butter roti, paneer mughali and pistache icecream. I felt a bit footsore but did not want to go back too soon so wandered into the station which is cleaner now than before but just as crowded with a big contingent of lone sleepers all along the sides of the big footbridge. There was an extremely long train on platform 1 which was already full as it should have left 15 minutes ago. Although full, passengers kept climbing on and then others came off; panicking families hunting for somewhere with seats free. The rats running around beneath the train were not attractive. I waited another 15 minutes hoping to get a good video of it but I eventually gave up. It was an excellent reminder not to travel by train and also to be grateful to Moin and Edwin for coming to visit me. Then I came home and watched Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy – the original very long series with the wonderful music and Alec Guinness as Smiley and Ian Richardson [also in the other series I watched earlier] as Haydon.

Thursday 9th February. *Writing as usual at 6.30 in evening.* I slept well as no traffic and no dogs but that meant I woke very stiff at about 6.30/ *Suri has just delivered two cups of tea.* The sky looked a bit grey but I set off by 7.15 for walk and was rewarded by seeing 6 coucals, 2 apparently a pair. Went usual NCC Nagar. My other reward was some fair quality pics of paradise flycatcher. It was halfway between the brown short tailed juvenile and the white long tail – that is it had a long brown tail. Just as I was thinking that I had only seen one kite this year, being chased by a house crow over the Tirupati West rail station, 2 soaring kites appeared above me. *Feeling peckish so having luxury of two shortbread biscuits with my tea.* The sun slowly came out and with it the sunbirds. Got back by 8.30 for ontime tiffen so nice and hot; my usual wada and 2 idlis with their very spicy onion/tomato/etc/soup. My driver appeared on time as always so I arrived 5 minutes early but no one came till 9.10. Manohar soon arrived so we had a nice chat while waiting for the others; my core of 4 microbiologists, 1 virologist and 2 biochemists. I tried to arrange to take them all to dinner but this is forbidden to the girls. Perhaps lunch is possible. I finished the difficult subject of attenuation so I am nearly finished. I wandered over to Sai gopal's virology office where I explained that the only students coming to my lectures are those who sacrifice themselves and do not have tiffen. The others have to queue and that makes them too late. Too late, he has at last accepted this, so next week I will give bioenergetics lectures to 1st year virology class. I had remembered to put on my unused blue shirt as we had to go and see the registrar on a little formal visit. He was previously prof of Telugu; a rather unpleasant looking man who always appears to be on the brink of a fit of rage. Apparently that is the case; we went early in the morning because by afternoon he is impossible. He also has a nasty reputation with lady visitors, using bad language and making personal remarks about their appearance, so they never visit him alone. We had the usual stuff where I am grateful for the opportunity of visiting this fast-developing campus.

Sai gopal then drove me back to guest house where we sorted next week's timetable. It is very difficult to persuade him that I do not want to spend my last day giving some special lecture. On the whole he is remarkably good. Always works hard and with a nice sense of humour and relaxed with the students most of the time. I have set myself the project of sorting most of my pictures before I get home so will spend all day

doing that. I alternated between this and sitting reading the history of india – now in 1975 when Indira Gandhi went power mad and declared an emergency, almost wrecking the democracy. I must look up the words of Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun. “I see you are enjoying your sun bath sir”. Lunch was on time and warm and the dahl was good, But sadly when I prised open the little fish box there were a lot of things like fruit flies [fish flies] all over it so it had to be discarded. Nice curds with moin sweets. No afternoon commitment so slept for more than one hour then forced myself to get on with my project.

Although the day had clouded over I kept to my original plan and set off for Uparapalli check post [pronounced ooparapally]. The rail crossing is still under construction so I crawled under the barrier and walked across only to be shouted at by the fierce looking foreman. I stopped and so did his slaves; but it was only “Photo sir”. They are like little boys all waving their implements at the camera. I was rather proud of my instructions to the auto driver who was rather unpleasant and aggressive to road users. I told him to stop this side of the big road which is being resurfaced and seemed to be a big barrier to climb over but he wanted to show off I think although I felt irritated as it seemed to present a good chance of us capsizing. He got safely across but descending the other side slithered into the side of the road in a ditch. He waved me out and I paid him. Unfortunately my irritation diminished my presence of mind otherwise I would have got a good video of his auto struggling [successfully] to clamber out of the ditch. I then walked through the very dusty village towards the hills where I went the other day with Vinay. This time I continued on the road for another mile through the paddy fields and sugar etc. large flocks of small palm swifts were hurtling around the palms, making me excited about the idea of watching the swifts in San Gimignano. I took some good pictures of prinias [I think], tiny long tailed birds that are all around but difficult to track down. The road was unpaved, just stone recently covered with red earth. So all rather dusty. Fortunately the sun came out for its setting so a peaceful stroll but with the concern that my feet may not last the next week as they feel rather achy. It was a very long way home ahead of me so I was relieved to see an auto slowly manoeuvring along the heavily rutted ‘road’. I explained that I wanted to go past Uparapalli then past Thumulagunta to the temple as the rail crossing is closed and we could not get past to the guest house. He looked a rather fierce young man and he said he could not take me all the way as he had other work but would take me to the checkpoint. Wonderful. When we got there he told me it is ok he will take me all the way. It felt slightly disloyal to drive past Thumulagunta but I resisted stopping and we went to the temple at the turning. I paid 40 rupees out so I gave him 50 rupees and lots of thanks and hands in prayer. His face transformed from aggressive basic to huge wagging grin. Then a dusty stroll over the rail crossing to home.

My young engineering friend Sahir always has tuition in the evenings so it has not been possible to meet up but he had said he would like to come and eat some night after tuition – he usually eats in the hostel mess after tuition. So at lunch time I sent a text to invite him and we are going this evening. He is very relaxing company as his English is good and he is not nervous of me as his professor. He arrived exactly 8.00 as suggested and we soon got an auto to Sindhuri park. The driver already had a passenger but he stopped because he told Sahir he has known me for 20 years; perhaps that is why he charged 50 rupees instead of 40. We had gobi Manchurian followed by kaju gobi which was very spicy but dull at same time. Sahir had a cold or allergy to make him sniff so he said he must not eat icecream so he had fruit salad which was just cut up bananas and apple. Altogether disappointing. The tank festival was over so there were fewer crowds than recently and we easily fought our way to nethaji road then back home. Sahir is good company, not expecting me to talk continuously. Later in guest house he told me he was taking homeopathic remedies for his allergy so I gently tried to debunk this medicine. I found my website stuff on this and he made a note for later.

Friday 10th February. I went for a walk but can't remember where. The road has now opened so the constant noise is back. It was my last lecture on molecular biology and I only had my core group whose picture I took under the banner outside. While having tea in the PURSE office it was as usual when sai gopal is absent, the various serving boys: Subba rao, a post doc chemist who usual drives me; Venkaiah a slight dark technician who reminds me of young gopi, Janikiram, the tall dogsbody who makes tea and sometimes drives me, and Bhuvana, a big-toothed friendly slim girl who is a technician and is doing a lot of work on the conference to be held on 25th February. I managed with difficulty to take their pictures; Bhuvana pretending to be shy. I then

went over to sai gopal's office to tell him that I would be teaching bioenergetics to year one virology students at 9.30 each day next week. He had wanted me to give a general research lecture to all purse people but I told him I was arranging a special lecture for the biochemists. He reluctantly agreed. I went to biochemistry to arrange this and it was achieved in about 5 minutes. I emphasised that I did not want an 'occasion' just a lecture which they appreciated. Abdul, the revolutionary pharmacist then drove me back and came in for a chat. Usual dull dahl lunch then sleep. Woken with sneezing and runny nose and dry throat so it seem that is back again. After reading some history I went to the dairy farm for my usual peaceful evening walk. On return I had 20 minutes to sit in the reddening sky, joined by Manohar, the competent virology student who comes to all my lectures; so had nice useful chat with him before showing usual family photos and a video of someone playing the last movement of brahms cello sonata. At 7.20, as planned Charlie arrived to drive me to his house. I think he assumes I want to go slowly but in fact I don't want him to go so slow that he keeps risking being in the wrong gear. I don't enjoy the white knuckle rides out to his place but cope by looking always to the side and not at the oncoming disasters. When we arrived he had a written list of questions about western music notation. He has a keyboard linked to his computer so, at his request, I gave him a little lesson on scales, arpeggios, minor scales and triads. They use a sort of tonic solfar system which we no longer use I think. Charlie has just bought a new base flute for about 4000 rupees [about £50] which he played with a background 'chant' on the computer. Very beautiful and inspired me to play a recording of Chaurasia playing similar music while writing this [on Saturday while waiting for lunch]. His sister in law was there and we had nice chat as her English is good. Lovely dinner of minced lamb and liver, followed by chicken biryani, washed down with lychee juice and followed by orange apple and strawberries. I gave Steven the little binoculars I bought from 7dayshop for £5 in a sale last year. So all up to the roof to play and especially for Charlie to play with my laser pointer which caused some consternation when directed down an alley 100 m away. I was feeling a bit subdued cos of irritating throat and suggested I got auto home. Fortunately this is always welcomed. I finished the evening watching the first instalment of Smiley's people.

Saturday 11th February. *Writing this at 6.30 in evening waiting for Balaji to come from Thumulagunta with my small camera.*

I woke at 6.0 with cough throat nose sneeze. Felt dejected. Walked about. Went back to bed to read the end of Six suspects. Absolutely wonderful raised morale to good level so drank my tea then set out late at 8.00 for morning walk as I have no lectures this morning. Dull sky with glimpses of sun. Very hot and no birds. Amazing. For first time took off shirt. Immediately a bee-eater appeared and then a few of usual birds including golden oriole. Saw my nearest young friends to say hello and photo of course; this time remembered to get him to write his name in my little book – Shennugan. As I walked into the guest house with my shirt around shoulders both staff called out shirt sir shirt sir. So?! Usual breakfast with Mendelssohn octet, then sweep and bath then roof and history. After early lunch while reading Middlemarch had hour sleep. Then wrote summary of mol biol stuff for students and sorted a few pictures. I phoned Balaji and arranged for him to come with Sumant to bring my little camera. Original plan had been to go to dinner with Ram [biochem] and his friend Karthick but Kartick phoned to say could he come to guesthouse as he had to go out of station in the evening. Good idea. They soon turned up and had a good chat with them. Karthick was obviously the brightest of the students and I expected to get to know him better but he was ill and then away earlier during the visit. I gave them my research lecture which included family pics etc then they had to go off to get the bus to Hyderabad. Early in their visit Moin had called from Hyderabad station to tell me he was about to leave – about 15 hours journey. As soon as the students left Balaji and Sumant appeared. His pictures of the engagement were all of family and mates cos the battery ran out; fortunately there was an official photographer. Suanth thought it very funny that I had thought he would drive me to Tirumula. Lots of apologies all round. They then told me that Barath Kumar, my friend with the damaged shoulder had got it sliding on his bike = the story about his father beating him was just a typical village joke.

Auto to Gandhi road, walk to Sindhuri park, panneer something dosa which was good and vanilla ice cream wonderful then quick auto home. I rejected the one at the station as he looked so ugly and wanted 50

rupees. I thought I would enjoy a stroll down Surya's Nethaji road for ol time's sake but was soon tired and got an auto for 40 rupees. Smiley's people then bed.

Sunday 12th February. A grim day. Woke at 6 with streaming cold which continued all day. *It is now 8.18 and I have a cough as well.* Had usual breakfast and then Moin arrived at 9.15 after a 16 hour journey from Hyderabad. Very good to see him and for a short time the cold symptoms diminish enough to chat. Sad chat. He cannot come with me to Chennai as there is a very important meeting of the heads of the research groups that he is in. they have to present their work to the funding agency. The good news is that Moin's is the highlight and gradually others are being directed to him to advise. I could not face going out so Moin arranged for kaju masala and naan to be sent from Sindhuri park. Good. Moin has arranged to come again next Sunday – as today he arrives at 9.15 and leaves at 4.15 for the 16 hour journey back. I must decide now whether to get Vinay to come with car, as previously offered or to hire car we had when he came here and go alone. I phoned Vinay to see if he wanted to come but he sent txt message to say that his grandpa had just had a heart attack and operation and Vinay was in the hospital. What that means cannot yet say. Moin had a bit of sleep in afternoon while I sat in sun trying to dry out. *Now waiting for the snack of bananas and crisps to come – requested for 7.00 but now 8.30.*

Food eventually arrived. 2 unripe bananas, 3 packets of Spanish flavour crisps and a greasy bag of something that is not the pakoras I asked for. I banana and 2 bags of crisps + shortbread seemed to be enough. Watched penultimate smiley film.

Monday 13th February. Had a dreadful night; this time waking up every 20 minutes to cough and fortunately to read PD james. Got up for usual breakfast; I ate half of it. Then prepared bioenergetics lecture for 1st year virology. Gradually felt a bit better so when sai gopal came, 15 minutes late I went with him and gave a 90 minute lecture. The 9 virology students were excellent so it was worthwhile. Vinay phoned in middle of lecture to tell that his grandpa is ok. Chowdappa has suggested that Vinay comes here Sunday evening and hires a car [same as before] and comes to Chennai then immediately returns home. Good plan. Coughing not too bad until afterwards. After chat with Sai Gopal I went back for usual dull lunch; ate half then slept fitfully for 2 hours. At 5 went for short dairy farm walk. Always strange -10 minutes noisy chaos then peace then 10 minutes noise to get back. Took a detour to little shops past the junction temple, buying some plain crisps from the friendly man in the smallest shop. I asked if he sold Limca lemon drink and he directed me a bit further on to the Super Market. I wish I had known of this before. Rounding an aisle I found myself face to face with a beautiful young mother with child in arms and a big Canon camera. SNAP I said wittily and won a sweet smile. Bought Fanta and some biscuits and salted cashew nuts which should be enough if I feel hungry. I cannot face walk etc down to Sindhuri park. I phoned Edwin who said he is about to set out from Kurnool and will arrive at 4.30am here. This made my campaign to get another mattress more acute. I have tried to do it so many times and this time I succeeded. Manohar [virology] phoned to say they were coming to see me. [manohar, mohan, narasimra rao and rajesh]. Had to talk too much so was pleased when they rushed off to get back for dinner at mess. Just before they left the mattress arrived with the main usually grumpy staff member and young friendly Lokesh. So I will retain my mattress which is a relief. I watched the last bit of smiley's people. As usual I am not sure how much I really understood it. I started to get a bit of a tummy ache and suddenly felt cold and wrapped myself in a shawl.

Tuesday 14th February. Had very disturbed night with very dry throat, coughing and tirupatitummy. Edwin texted me at 4.00 to say he did not want to disturb me [which he did by texting] so had gone to hostel and would arrive here at 8.0. He came at 9.00 dressed as usual in black jeans and shirt. So nice to see him after a rather depressing night. Sai Gopal came at 9.30 to collect me – he had forgotten that the lecture was cancelled. I told him he can now be a vice chancellor as he has succeeded in getting me an extra mattress. He phoned one of the lab boys who was in town to get him to bring me 2 tablets [mix of antibiotic and loperamide]. Fortunately my cough was almost cleared up so could chat at length with Edwin. He has passed some big exam to get a job as a banker. Besides needing a job cos his father is not able to earn now, he wants to offer to marry his [hindu] girlfriend. I have learned more from him than from anyone else about how the university works. The head of biochemistry, Murthy, is apparently universally hated by students as his only

motive is money. To get to do a PhD with him you have to pay 2 lakhs [200,000 rupees]. This is private payment on top of official fees. I was glad that the other staff do not do anything like this.

Edwin got the staff to bring lunch of chapatti and palak paneer for him and crisps and dry pakoras and curds. Then we both had a bit of sleep. He used a new Indian word for going in a group “we are going grouply sir”.

I am writing this at 9.00 in evening after dinner of shortbread, crisps and bananas. Gut seems to have settled. Edwin had to leave at 3.00 to collect his bag from the hostel and go to the station to go to Chennai to meet with friends then on to Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu and then to the hill station of Ooty. Feeling sad. I then sat on the roof to have a sun bath while finishing PD James. The roof garden is wonderful or I would be stuck in my cell for too long. Balaji turned up to collect his photos. I told him to bring a CD and I would copy them onto that. So I spent an hour photoshopping them to remove red eye etc. my next room neighbour then came in to introduce himself; a nervy little professor of human communication from Chennai. I had the usual but prolonged interrogation so I showed him photos of birds and thumulagunta: do you go there every day No; how long do you spend there one hour; do you pay them money no; etc etc etc etc. Ok sir next time you go I will come with you, it is so wonderful what you are doing. I started to get very irritated with him till I thought of him as a typical comic film character. I showed him my bird pictures So wonderful do you see all these everyday? No it took 6 years, wonderful. I am so proud to lived next to you. I will come with you when you go taking bird photos. No because if they see one person they behave normally but if they see two then they fly away; “I am learning so much – birds like one person but they cannot tolerate two persons”. *Haydn’s Creation has finished so I will find a film to watch.*

Watched first half of Spartacus. Nearly interesting cos of some great actors.

Wednesday 15th February. Had fair night with few reading sessions then woke feeling better but still not fit so took another tablet and cancelled my morning lecture and my special biochemistry dept lecture for afternoon. I ate one wada for breakfast but could not face the spicy red soup that usually goes with it. Did a load of washing then burnt my feet on very hot roof. Summer does seem to have come. Sai gopal’s research scholar came to collect an article from me to print – to referee for good old jgmicrobiology. He returned later to show I only had first page so I had to wrestle again with the slow internet to get a full download. I found I had enough energy to sort out all my bird photos, quite a few of which are new birds that are difficult to identify. I then collected all my videos into one place so that I can make films for tv from them. One of the staff came and asked about lunch; 2 chapatis, dahl and curds. 30 minutes later surya arrived with the usual veggie rice but no dahl or chapatis. I was well enough to eat some of it. I am now reading {on kindle} an American ‘legal’ thriller in vulgar american – a complete contrast to elegant PD James. I have a bone to pick with her; I actually woke last night thinking of this. She had a character who put a CD on, to calm her down; it was ‘Variations on a fugue by Bach’. You cannot have variations of a ‘form’ or ‘structure’. Naughty. After lunch had read and sleep then more picture sorting, a read in the sun and a 5 o’clock walk up by ncc nagar and the lake. Very peaceful and good to be reminded of the positive side of Tirupati visits. Edwin phoned to check on ‘your health sir’. He is now in Tamil Nadu and having a good time. I miss him. Just before leaving I was accosted by a bearded man in lunghi and muslim hat. After a quick introduction, he is attending a space science conference here, he asked if I could tell him in which direction the sun set. I told him more or less in line with our corridor but he was doubtful so I used my wonderful adventure man watch and showed I was right within a few degrees. It is so he can pray in the right direction. The muslims pray at fixed times in fixed directions while the hindus pray to anything anytime anywhere. My next door neighbour came onto the roof as I was phoning Moin in the dying hours of daylight. When I was finished he came up to say that he had seen my light on at midnight but did not bang on the door to disturb me; I had fallen asleep watching Spartacus. *I shall now boldly go to dinner. Whoops a powercut. Room immediately becomes unpleasantly hot as the fan drifts to a halt.*

At 7.00 I packed my bag with kindle phone notebook pen, got money for auto etc. Just about to change shorts for trousers and there was a knock on door. There is suman [tall 18, toothy, vain nice] with Dinesh [14] who I thought was called Ajay, and my best friend Barath Kumar [14], from Thumulagunta. I had asked Balaji to bring Barath sometime to show pictures of home, so I guess he asked Suman to bring him. They came in

carrying sticks of sugarcane for me. I said one is [more than] enough. So a long session of looking at photos which I promised to copy onto a DVD and give to Suman. Barath and Suman found my hats and wore them for the next 90 minutes. Then every combination of photos. While looking at pics on computer Barath was his usual extra-affectionate hugging self; nice for a few minutes but soon too hot. I played them a bit of the DVD of Schiff playing Beethoven cello sonata so they knew what it sounds like. Not very interested I think. I still had a lot of chocolate so gave the boys a big bar. They demanded that I cut it into 3 for them. At about 8.30 Manohar and another 1st year Virology student appeared. Suman told the others that they must all go but I told them to stay a bit longer for more photos. Manohar's friend who I did not recognise wanted a special photo of him with me. Please sir put arm here sir round shoulder. Then more photos and the boys left after giving sugarcane to Manohar. I went out with them to their 2 bicycles, Barath on the back of Suman's. They set off a few wobbly yards and Barath jumped off and ran back for final hug and delicate kiss, followed by Dinesh and the same. I promised to visit Thumulagunta on Saturday afternoon. I was so happy that I had not gone out and missed them; it was a really nice visit.

Manohar's friend then soon left leaving Manohar to deal with the real reason for visit I think; he has to give a seminar on Saturday on the cell cycle about which I know nothing so he had brought his notebook in vain. Eventually he left. So I was now free to go to dinner but was too exhausted to go. So while writing this I ate 3 packets of crisps [rather small ones].

Now planning to drink Sprite with Christmas cake while watching Spartacus. Not a good film but idle curiosity got me to the end.

Thursday 16th February. Slept ok but woken by very heavy traffic at 7.15. NO tea this morning. Feel more or less well so went for my usual morning walk but saw few birds. Much hotter now. Filled all the time with the thought that I am leaving perhaps for the last time. On a narrow path a man and his wife came towards me; I stepped aside but the man stood aside and insisted that you "have the way of right sir". Obviously I am morally superior so I just accepted it. Sury had brought my breakfast before I set out at 7.45. Silly man. I think he has found a nearer, but worse, restaurant than the other two. Idli wada with soup but not good so just had dry cold wadas. I did then get my twoteas. Sai gopal came to get me for my 9.30 virology bioenergetics lecture at 9.35. 90 minute lecture very enjoyable – on Mitchell stuff. Sai Gopal then drove me back for tea and preparation of my special formal departmental lecture. Sury brought usual dull dahl and rice for lunch, before sleeping and collection for my 3.00 lecture - at 3.10. We had agreed that it would be in the bigger PURSE lecture theatre and they had set up projector there but SG had wanted it in the department. The lecture theatre was too full so I led them off to the better theatre where, thanks to our work a couple of weeks ago everything was working. It was nice to see all the students who should have been at my lectures. It is clear that the best part of my lecture is the personal and historical stuff. I got someone to drive me back before 5.00 so I could go for a dairy farm walk which was as usual peaceful, again a bit haunted by the closeness of the end of this visit. As I entered I met someone I recognised who came up and shook hands "hello Chris I hope you remember me". He was an engineering student I met last year or before, sitting on a stone seat by the lake, where we had a really nice long chat. I can't remember why we did not meet again. Anyway he said that he had remembered me well because they did half a page on me in the local newspaper with pictures and he had it on his wall so he could show off to his friends. I was then a bit unkind and told him that he should not come with me as I had sore throat [only dry for 90 minute lecture and no tea]. No problem sir. Saw my friendly hoopoes and the little birds that live in the fields there 2 types of prinia, pipits and sitticola. Also usual sunset birds, paddybirds, bee-eaters, crows, egrets, mynahs, swallows.

As I waded through the chaos of oncoming buses, cars, autos, bikes, cycles and nervous ladies with bundles on their heads at the rail crossing I heard a Chreeesh chreeesh – from a little boy on the back of a cycle wobbling amongst the traffic as his 'driver' struggled to turn round to see me. One of the local boys I guess. After 30 minutes on the roof I set off to Sindhuri park for dinner. I was picked up by a motorcyclist who recognised me from my banner in the university, and driven down to Balaji colony. I strolled in the chaos through the colony then by the town clubcrossing and Gandhi road to dinner of masala dosa and strawberry icecream, both delicious. Then wandered through the back streets and temple to Nethaji road and home. My

dinner was too small so I wrote this, while eating Christmas cake, and watching the brilliant *In Bruges* and so to bed.

Friday 17th February. Very hot all night so had a shorts-only, fast fan night, waking frequently and reading my American court drama. Finished at 6.50 so slowly got up. Smiling Venu soon came with a beaker of tea so I prepared my final lecture, then set off still feeling a bit groggy, due to mild starvation, towards NCC nagar and usual nearby forest. A lovely morning with the black and white magpie robins singing from the treetops and bulbuls galore. I think I saw a golden-backed woodpecker but could not track it down. As I got near the dark bamboo thicket where the track dips down to a small stream I did my routine stop where I have seen the paradise flycatcher and forest wagtail previously. I was just thinking that I had not seen the wagtails since my first couple of days here. These are rare and according to Helms book this is way outside their breeding range. Then of course he appeared running about on the edge of the water. It is so dark it is difficult to get good pictures but I later found that as expected some were the best I have managed. I was about to move on when the paradise flycatcher appeared with its very long tail, weaving its way under the branches. It is the almost mature one with blue-black crested head and brown back and tail. I should have got many very good pictures but it is difficult for the camera to focus at full zoom in poor light and masses of conflicting branches and twigs. I later found that I had a few good ones although bisected by a small branch; anyway, best I have managed. I then thought that as this is clearly my lucky day then perhaps the bird I only caught a glimpse of last year, the black naped monarch with its beautiful blue plumage might be kind enough to join in. I didn't see it but suddenly a few metres away by the water was a beautiful blue bird with an orange and white front. It was a completely new bird to me and I got some excellent pictures – of Tichell's flycatcher.

So to home and good idlis/wada. My driver was 10 minutes late for my last lecture to the virologists, on some bioenergetics aspects of photosynthesis and chemolithotrophs. The core 5 were there and a pleasure to teach, Manohan actually getting brave enough to ask a sensible question or two. Then lots of messing about, to get money out of the system; they will not release the cheque until the end of the visit, then it has to be signed by me – to Sai Gopal – who then has to present it and get the cash. I should not complain as they are paying for most of my trip including flight. I wandered into biochemistry where the Previous students were doing some enzyme assays and I found Lalitha and Bhanu with their test tube racks and archaic pipettes, to invite them to come this afternoon at 5.0 to guest house for a farewell chat. Got a lift to guest house where I had to sit in the hot room with no fan in a power cut to write the requested special welcome letter for insertion into the book of their forthcoming conference, and to prepare a summary of my virology bioenergetics for the University records.

I seem to have fallen asleep. I was brought lunch that was slightly more attractive than usual – the rice was plain with bits of veg and a few nuts. Lamar then came into my room with an opened newspaper package containing my usual rice mess, thrusting it at me encouragingly as to a potentially dangerous dog. I snarled, indicated thumbs up at the rice already on my plate and ushered him out with his usual wheezy muttering. *I am writing this at 10.30 listening to some flute music given me by Sai Gopal; very soporific.*

After lunch I had long sleep and read – short stories by GK Chesterton [the man who knew too much], from Kindle free books. The language is such a pleasure after my American stuff. Loaded pics onto the computer and got ready for my farewell function. Driver arrived at same time as Sai Gopal, desperate for my signature on the cheque as the bank closed in 5 minutes. The students were waiting for me but we could not start till Sai Gopal was back. I had succeeded in foregoing the usual 3 chief guests, special invitees etc. these people are usually late at these functions and are often pompous and dull. All the students seemed to be there. Manohar and my most loyal supporters gave a short thank you speech. Manohar got yells of laughter for his description of his problem understanding me, some of it probably imitations of my English. One of the staff then spoke, a short fat irritating busybody who said I had taught him 15 years ago and my teaching had directed his life ever since [look at him and beware]. Then of course Sai Gopal did his usual slightly silly exaggerations of my status etc. This year I was one of the best known scientists in the world [in the world of quinoproteins perhaps]. Apparently I had paid for the higher education of some of the local villagers; I had paid for a boy from a local hotel to come to uk to train and to help him get a job as manager of one of the best hotels in london [good old

Surya]. I gave my usual sentimental chat and was rewarded by a garland, a small silk shawl and a box of 7 CDs of Indian music for evening and morning and stress etc. it seems to be based on Ragas but I prefer the real thing.

I was then mobbed by students for photos on cell phones and for autographs before I was let outside to film the cutting down of my banner, requiring someone to climb the tree. I was given my last motorbike drive back to the guest house followed soon by Sai Gopal with my 71,350 rupees, 15,000 of which had to go back to him for a loan and for guest house. While he was there Parthasarathy, the mad head of biochemistry past, phoned to complain that he had not been told I was coming; he wants me to give a lecture at his nearby small university; "it is ok he still has 2 days available". I confess an unkindness – I gave him my phone number to make arrangements but with one digit wrong. Lalitha and Bhanu soon came and Sai Gopal left us to sit and chat on the roof. As soon as they had gone Sahir arrived for a final chat. He was keen to copy some of my countryside pics onto his pendrive so we sorted some of these and then decided I would finish with more pics tomorrow and he would come and collect them, perhaps going to dinner later. Charlie then turned up to take me to dinner, helped take pics of Sahir, and then off we went. I do not like the trip to Charlie's as he goes very fast up the long broad race track of a road from the Town club toward Kapilatheertham and then fights his way through the alleys to his house, with huge holes in the road, piles of sand, speed mountains, aggressive oncoming bikes, all in the dark. Good to arrive for relaxed chat with his landlord's older daughter who has just trained as a nurse. Poor Steven had a fierce cough every few seconds so no dance film this year. Nice dinner. *Just been shocked awake by my nutty old neighbour who wanted to check if all is ok, had your dinner? All is calm? Are they treating you well? I see you are busy [yes sorry]; ok no problem I will close the door and see you tomorrow [not if I see you coming].*

Before leaving I had to go and sit in the landlord's downstairs part of the house, with his daughter, wife, and mother and maid's daughter. No one was saying anything so I had to struggle to make a conversation. They are clearly Roman Catholics, every surface and every wall space given to sentimental pictures and models of Mary and Jesus with his heart exposed, leaking pulsing drops of blood like Christmas tree lights, so I asked if they collaborated with the Lutherans; yes of course we will soon be cooperating by fasting together during lent. I refrained from suggesting that eating together might be more ecumenical but it isn't my business. We later strolled through the backstreets to the bigger road to get an auto. The first had a driver and his mate who were clearly drunk. The next seemed ok but a bit fierce looking. Charlie paid and said I must not let the driver ask for more when we arrived. Then a hurried farewell to them all and an even more hurried hurtle home. He went a complex backstreet route through Balaji colony to the traffic light which he jumped causing a town bus to roar and scream to a halt. I had previously succeeded in getting him to go slower by banging his shoulder and indicating calm down. When we arrived he pointed his black beard and red eyes at me and indicated I should pay. I mimed that Charlie had already paid so he should leave. He mimed give me my money so I waved and walked in. He sat and revved his engine for some time but eventually he left. *It is now 11.15 so I shall drink a lot of water and go to sleep.*

Saturday 18th February. Had usual night with 2 reading stops – short stories The Man who Knew Too Much. The morning had mist over the hills but I got up for my teabeaker from Venu. Should I ever find myself where I have a manservant Venu would qualify; always smiling, always understands, always responds immediately; good start to the day. I rather dutifully plodded off up to the ncc nagar. As the sun boiled off the mist the sunbirds, bulbuls and magpie robins started their singing. Had a morning of old favourites with the bee-eaters celebrating the morning with their exuberant swooping circles. Two coucals honoured me with a flypast. Got back for excellent warm idlis/wada and more tea. As arranged, two students came at 9.20 to chat; Manohar and Sreekanth. Manohar had to rush off to a 10 o'clock lecture leaving gentle easy listening Sreekanth. He did a teaching BA before his MSc microbiology and he hopes to teach eventually. His English is best of all the students.

Spent till lunch sorting photos and trying to make a DVD of all the Thumulaunta photos for Suman and Barath Kumar to take in the afternoon. The DVD player and writer has broken, as in my previous Sony; this time it will be on warranty. Sat in the sun for a bit. Excellent lunch then sleep. At 3.40 Gopi arrived with his

mother and younger brother who is the thinnest youth in India, with a beautiful smile. No English but he seems to understand what I say. Showed lots of pics then secretly gave Gopi a bagful of rupees to help pay for his wedding; this was easily possible cos the DST-PURSE scheme paid me for air travel, taxis to airport and daily allowance. They left me at 4.30 to return to Chittoor. The period of sad partings. I hurriedly copied all of Thum photos onto a spare pendrive and set off to Thumulagunta. It seemed deserted so I went to Barath's house and they all pointed out over the field shouting cricket cricket. So I went over for yet more photos with Barath, Dinesh and little affectionate Madhu. Bobby soon came running over so more photos were demanded. Barath then led me to his house and nervously up onto the roof by way of open concrete stairs covered in drying clothes. Dinesh who is a little slow (mentally) at last gained my attention by climbing up onto one of the reinforced concrete posts that are always left on the roofs after building to be used for future vertical extensions. I was pleased I could note the name of the small noisy translating girl – Honey Shree. I parted sadly from my followers at the village entrance and immediately grabbed an auto when we reached the main road. Barath cleverly climbed in with me to come as far as the corner near the Thumulagunta Balaji temple and Dinesh hopped onto the seat beside the driver. Barath packed away the binoculars into my bag, finding the bar of plain chocolate which I had brought for him, which he tucked into his shirt. We hopped out at the corner for sentimental goodbyes then aimed at home. Of course we hit the queue at the crossing for the train so I got out and paid the smiling driver, waded through the noisy impatient traffic, ducking under the rail-crossing barriers and walked the short way home. While on Barath's roof I had received 3 calls, from Moin, Surya and Vinay. Moin was already on the train from Hyderabad, fortunately he had a sleeper. Surya said he would call back and Vinay explained that he was already in Tirupati. It turned out later that he had borrowed his grandfather's huge Scorpio tank of a car and had brought 3 friends. They are going at 3.0 am up to Tirumula and then back here to sleep [in a separate room] and then off to more temples till the evening.

I swept my room and started to do a bit of clearing up but soon Sahir, my young engineering student, arrived to go to dinner. This had to be at Kalyan Residency as I had to pay the 2,500 rupees for the arrival car. The road was very crowded especially down Gandhi road. Mr Ravi was at his travel desk so I could pay him, then had good dinner. We were both coughing a lot so not much chat. The drive back was the worst ever at the corner of pissing street and the road to Sindhuri park. It took 15 minutes to go about 200 hooting dusty yards with buses separated by jeeps and autos and bikes filling space and any spare taken up with walking pilgrims, children and dogs. Got back and copied some countryside pics onto Sahir's pendrive with a few pictures of him and one of us together. Vinay then appeared and we prepared to go; he said he would come downstairs with us. Typical aggressive lack of privacy. I told him Kurchony and I went with Sahir onto the roof where he tried to ask for forgiveness for any 'mistakes he had made'. I have had this sort of nervous apology before. I told him mistakes are not possible with friends, agreed? Yes sir thank you I have been so blessed. I said the blessing has all been mine. So more sentimental hugs and off he went sadly down the stairs. I then went to meet Vinay's friends who were still in the car. It is big and black and chrome with huge cowcatchers etc. it has a big MLA badge in the window, grandfather being an MLA, a state MP. Forced myself to write this while falling asleep. Now I can flop under the high speed fan and really sleep. Good night.

Sunday 19th February. Slept fitfully, waking and thinking about leaving. Gave in when tea arrived, got up and went for usual NCC walk. Beautiful morning but getting very hot by 8.30 when Moin phoned to say that he was in Renigunta and would arrive in 40 minutes. Paused long enough to get a very good picture of common iora [looks different from book as it is a southern blacker variety]. Moin soon arrived looking relaxed and cool after his 16 hour journey. I gave him a novel (six suspects by author of slumdog millionaire) when he was last here and he had read the first third in a non stop session of 5 hours. He was expecting to finish it this afternoon on the way home. Our breakfasts of idli wada arrived and I struggled through mine. Of course we talked continuously till lunch (kaju masala from Sindhuri park) followed by sleep and more talk. Made a little video of me interviewing Moin about his work; actually I asked a few questions and then he gave a small excellent seminar on it before going off to get an auto to the rail station. Half an hour later he phoned to say he is in the train passing through Renigunta. I pottered about packing half-heartedly then at 5.00 went for a walk and was lucky to catch Lokesh as he was about to take his younger brother to get his bicycle mended in

Thumulagunta [the bigger upper caste part]. I took a small video of 5 girls walking round the termite/snake shrine winding thin string around it like a web; why? Ended the day as usual sitting on the roof in the last bit of daylight with the crows and mynahs setting off home. Packed, almost. Walked down to get an auto to Gandhi road which was very busy, then to Sindhuri park for the last time where I had 2 masala dosas and icecream. Told them I was leaving and distributed 10 rupee notes to the lower girl helpers who also smile so nicely. When I told them I was leaving tomorrow about a dozen waiters etc came over to wave goodbye as I blew kisses.

Came back direct and finished packing and started to write this. A banging on the door revealed Barath with a friend, Sashadri, who apparently I met in 2003. So I showed pictures from yesterday and from 2003 and other past pictures, Barath pointing out all the boys I now know, especially himself. Gave him a few English coins I found in my case and ¼ bar of chocolate. Libby then phoned to confirm heathrow terminal 5. Barath wanted to say hello which he did "I am Barath". After a little game with the incredible laser pointer they went off on a borrowed motorbike, after lots of hugs and kisses from Barath who waved frantically from the back of the bike until out of sight.

Vinay then appeared with a friend. They and 2 others are staying in the agricultural university guesthouse up the road. This is where his father Chowdappa always stays as it is a 2Pukka clean modern place". They are all coming to Chennai then back to Bangalore in the huge 7 seater Scorpio. I persuaded him he must have breakfast before coming at 8.0 in morning. I am trying to make the journey into a fun trip instead of the usual stressful ride. We both have maps and one of the boys knows Chennai.

Monday 19th February. Woke as usual at 6.30 and staggered about doing my last bit of packing. I put my mats and coathangers on the little old table for anyone to take. I phoned Vinay at 7.45 to check that they were ready to leave; of course "they are finishing breakfast but would be on time". In fact they arrived at a few minutes past eight. No sign of Sai Gopal although I had told him I would be leaving exactly at 8.0. He had phoned at 7.30 to ask when I was leaving. I told him for about the 5th time. No problem he will be here. He wasn't so we left. Ten minutes later he phoned 'where are you sir; I told you I am coming'. 'I told you I am going'. I now feel guilty but it avoided me having to pretend I am coming next year or having fuss of telling I am not coming. [He was clearly rather upset about this so I later dedicated my web page of this visit to him to convince him of my respect and friendship; he told me later that he was delighted with this and printed the webpage and pinned it to all dept. noticeboards. Vinay is an excellent driver and it was a pleasure to sit in the front with a good view. We set out on the correct back route to the main road to Puttur and Tirutani and over the ghats [hills] doing good time and enjoying the countryside. After the Puttur bypass there was a big left turn with an arch with names of places on it. Vinay turned left through the arch and stopped while I tried to find the places on my map while the others asked people the way. I was sure we should not turn left there but they were convinced by locals that this was the best way to Chennai. In vain I tried to explain that we did not want Chennai north or central but South. After some time going their route it was obvious we were on the inappropriate alternative route and that we would have to turn south to get back on the road. The first part of this road was excellent with great views of hills and little traffic, but after we turned south the road was often very damaged with heavy lorry traffic. All very frustrating. We were an hour going a short distance. We got back on the proper road and I was pleased to see a couple of signs saying Poonamallee.

We then stopped in a small town while the boys asked the way again, telling Vinay we go left at the fork. I told them "No we go the correct way this time"; "but sir this boy lived in Chennai he knows this place". I was a bit irritated and rude and said that they had already sent us the wrong way once and explained with maps and diagrams that they must follow my route as it went south of Guindy and then direct to the airport where the hotel is. I was soon relieved to see the name of Poonamalle High Road which went the next 30 km to our bit of Chennai. As we approached one of the boys said Vinay I need pee. Good I thought then I will not have the stress of wondering if we will make it to the hotel. I assumed we would stop at a hotel or something but we did not stop. After 20 minutes I said Vinay I also need a pee. OK sir is this ok as he immediately pulled off the road by a long wall on the boundary of a cement factory with heaps of dusty rubbish between the road and the wall. The boys just stood in the noisy busy dusty road and peed into the rubbish. I had to climb down

through it so I could pee against the wall as any Englishman should. The Google maps of Guindy and airport area were out of date so we did not have to do the difficult one way system but got onto the huge concrete raised roundabout that I had negotiated so many times during its 5 year construction. So we were soon at the hotel, taking 4 hours instead of the 3.5 hours on the way to Tirupati and the 2hr 50 minutes offered by Google. The boys wanted to set off immediately, to visit a friend in Chennai then the long drive to Bangalore.

I found it more relaxing to be in the hotel alone than with friends, although of course I would have preferred Moin, Madhu, Gopi, Surya, Imran or other ghosts from the past to be there. I was upgraded to a top floor inside room as it was more silent, with one hour free internet. I immediately went down again and got the staff to find me a computer with a printer to print out my boarding pass then had a wonderful lunch of thin crust margarita pizza with Italian bread rolls and butter. The last few days I had eaten very little, having hardly any appetite; I resisted the offered glass of red wine at £7 a glass. This was followed by a gentle relaxed 5 hours lying around the pool with one short swim. It is strange lying on clean towel with the hooting of Chennai outside and the planes taking off immediately over the hotel, to hear Koil, Shikra, mynahs and parakeets doing their stuff. The same assistant was there as the last times we have been. He has an amazing memory – he said he remembered that one year I was there with my wife. I am so so pleased that Libby came that one time as I still often think that Libby would like this then realise of course that she did like it. I am still impressed with her courage. At 5.30 I went in and sent a few emails from my room then packed ready to go and went down to dinner. The menu was very limited at 6.30 as dinner did not start till 7. The waiter said it is ok sir I will get the full menu so I ordered fish and chips and sat eating rolls and butter waiting for it. Chips good fish in 3 bits in rather tough gritty batter but not thankfully spiced. I checked yet again that they would give me a wake up call at 1.00 then went to bed, watched BBC world news for a few depressing minutes then slept till woken by my wakerupper.

Tuesday 21st February. The cost of the hotel, about the same as a medium London one, is worth it at this stage; quick courteous check out then free 8 minute drive through the night to the airport. This is now well-renovated but chaotic. Usually BA staff are visible, intercepting customers and directing, but not this time. I stood in a queue for some time as I had read that it was for BA, London but it turned out to be for another flight. I was wrongly directed a few more times until at last they opened the check desks with the correct flight number on it. There seemed to be no queue, just a mass of overlaid trolleys, many with children perched on top, facing different directions, with me nervously circling around the outside of it all. I then caught the eye of a nice indian lady who told me I was in the right place and that we were in a sort of informal counterflow system, the type that is usually delineated by tapes or ropes which seemed to make sense. Apparently our plane was a bit late coming in and so *they* knew there was no hurry to get people checked in; this was obviously stupid as *we* did not know and anyway it is always a hurried frantic business. I cheered myself up slightly by repeating to myself that it was the last time. “Sorry sir no upgrade is possible, these are given if the main cabin is oversubscribed but it would have made my day sir to give you an upgrade”. That’s something. Fairly easy getting through security but no time to buy Libby’s earrings. Went to the loo for a pee; utterly disgusting water and worse over the floor, loose seat lid thankfully not needed, no lock on door; hurrah for half a prophylactic immodium. I cannot imagine that I had any influence but last year on my online feedback to BA I had suggested that the boarding of passengers in the proper sequence would best be done by a little set of barriers with labels with the seat numbers on – instead of the unclear announcements and the irritation of fighting queues of people being turned away as they were not needed yet. Perhaps I had a success as they had 3 queues and a patient BA lady directing people to these and extracting children and wheelchairs neatly into a separate fast lane.

As I got on the plane I was directed to the far side which I thought was wrong but she insisted that my seat was on that side of the plane. It wasn’t, so I had to fight across the plane through the seats with my wheeled bag and computer bag. Then of course my seat was occupied by an old indian lady. I sorted that out and helped her very elderly relative into the middle seat. He did not have the strength to lower himself into his seat so I became his helper throughout the flight. Nice old man from Chennai originally but now living in Newham. Flight was 11.5 hours. I slept little but had nice long read of PD James on my kindle. I half-heartedly

watched a Tintin film. Soon after take off we had the dreaded BA breakfast of rubber omelette, sausage and hash browns. Half way we had a snack of biscuits then last hour we had wonderful lunch of spicy chicken and rice. Our arrival was delayed 30 minutes circling over London. Our baggage seemed to be taking a long time to arrive until an embarrassed BA lady came and told us we had been directed to the wrong carousel. Mine was just coming out as I arrived. so soon into Arrivals to be met by Libby carrying my nice new coat. Easy drive home in Mondeo. Wonderful to arrive.

Birds [in order of birds as in bird books]. Cattle egret; paddy bird; wood sandpiper; pariah kite; shikra; kestrel; grey junglefowl*; grey partridge; white-breasted waterhen; red-wattled lapwing; wood sandpiper; little brown dove; spotted dove; rose-ringed parakeet; koel; coucal; brainfever bird; spotted owlet; palm swift; house swift; red-breasted kingfisher; blue-tailed bee-eater; little green bee-eater; Common grey hornbill; hoopoe; indian roller; coppersmith; red-rumped swallow*; common swallow; indian pipit; yellow wagtail; grey wagtail; black-headed cuckoo-shrike; common wood-shrike; small minivet; red-vented bulbul; red-whiskered bulbul; white-browed bulbul; common iora; gold-fronted leafbird; ashy swallow-shrike; paradise flycatcher; Tickell's blue flycatcher*; Asian brown flycatcher*; white-browed fantail; magpie robin; pied bush-chat; chiffchaff; tailor bird; ashy prinia; indian prinia; Grey-breasted prinia*; streaked fantail warbler [aka zitting cisticola]*; Blyth's reed warbler*; tawny-bellied babbler [aka rufous-bellied]; yellow-billed babbler [previously thought to be common babbler]; purple sunbird; purple-rumped sunbird; Chestnut shouldered petronia*; spotted munia; brahmyn mynah; rosy starling; common mynah; indian tree pie; black-headed oriole; golden oriole; jungle crow; house crow; white-bellied drongo; black drongo; [Total 71; 7 new species].

Books: India after Gandhi: The history of the world's largest democracy by Ramachandran Guha; Vikas Swarup Six suspects; Barbara Kingsolver – Prodigal Summer; Rohinton Mistry – Such a long journey and Tales from Firozsha Baag. **On kindle:** Darwin Origin of Species; Pride and Prejudice; Middlemarch [not finished]; the same history Of India; GK Chesterton, The man who knew too much; PD James - Cover her face and The private patient; Rebecca Forster Hostile witness; Geoff dyer, Jeff in Venice, Death in Varanasi

Health. 26th -30th. Dry sore throat and cough 5 days. 1st feb runny nose etc for 3 days; 11th streaming cold 3 days then on 14th Tirupati tummy for 3 days

People [from notebook]: Sahir. civil eng student. Gave me pen as present. Muslim. 7893323082 .ahmedsyedsajid7@gmail.com; Tea lady Vanuja; Sweeper Ganga Raju – promised to send photo; Odd older bringer of lunch Kamar; Friend Venu; Small competent is raviteja; Lokanardh small old friend.

Thumulagunta; 1st set of individual pics: Balachandra 10; Honey shree 12 [good little translator, friend of Suman or Sumanth]; Madhu 12; Ishwar 8; Mounish ? ; madhu Sai? 14;raj 13; Hamaprya, honey, tanuja; Jogesh and doll; suman and darling honey. P. Barath Kumar, Door No. 4-15/2 Thumulagunta Tirupati; With Barath to guest house on Sunday – Seshadri. Boy at house near guest house on way to NCC. Shennugan; Lokesh: lokeshloka222@gmail.com; Lokesh brother c.durgaprasadraju

Students & friends: E. Anjaneyulu. Biochemistry scholar, genetics of millet, friend of moin; Visitors to my room: m. mastan micro; T.sanjeev royal [Nehru] biochem; Rkb bharadwaj [karthik] micro. Ramanjineyulu [ram] biochem. Tall enthusiast poor English; friend of karthik; Srikanth. Nmcr. Good eng. Came to dinner once then to roof with manohar for farewell; want to be teacher.

srikanthkomandur@gmail.com; Amaranadha ?; P. manjunath. Tall thin glasses and bike; Fnal yr biochemists: Santosh ? rao; Bhaskar ; Bhananjayulu. Pharmacy lecturer s.abdul althaji. Boys at the tank: Akhil siva; jyotheesh veera sai; sanhar; kiran; khaleel; muneendra; Their uncle – hr.hussenaiah@gmail.com

Best students: Virology – manohar manohar5030@gmail.com; Biochemistry D.Lalitha; m.s.bhanu; meenaa02@gmail.com; Biotechnology. R. Denesh rdenesh143@gmail.com. Virology left to right: Manohar, mohan, c.narasimra rao, B.rajesh. Driver to zoo. Nagaraj. Sai krupa travels. 9866261007.

DST PURSE staff. Dr Y subba rao [PhD chemistry]; Venkaiah [small 27 like gopi]; Janikiramya [tall tea man]; Bhuvana organising conference; Junior research fellow glasses nice: k peddanna peddi.rayalu@gmail.com.

Pictures. Taken mainly with Canon Powershot SX40. 35x optical zoom. [24-840mm equivalent]. Image stabiliser. HD video.

Front cover: Entrance to the PURSE building with my welcome banner and some of my favourite students.

Back cover: Tirupati West station, halfway on my walk along rail track to town. Govindaswamy gopuram in distance.

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