

India letters home. 1984 and 1985. In NEW/IMDIA/Madurai 1984 and 1985

NB: I have omitted the extensive 'with love' etc from the end of the letters.

These were written in early visits and kept by Libby. Only some letters survived.

1984. My 2nd visit to India.

I had seen an advert for a Membrane Conference in Madurai. As a way of getting funds to visit Tirupati again I had successfully invited myself. INSA - Indian National Science Academy was involved in funding my trip. The conference was then held back a year but I was still allowed to keep the funds for a short visit to the Kamaraj University in Madurai, a famous temple town in the South of Tamil Nadu. *[Then in 1985 I went for 4 weeks to Madurai.]*

I went by way of Bombay, arriving at the International airport and going by minibus to the Domestic airport to fly to Madras. In Madras I stayed at the Savera Hotel (4 star) in the Mylapore district. Then flew to Madurai to the Kamaraj University where my host was Head of Biochemistry Dr Rajamanikam. The exchange rate was about 1 rupee = 5p

9th November. Bombay Domestic Airport.

Dear Libby, Clive and Hugh

I hope this will arrive early enough to surprise you. I have 4 hours to wait and I am sitting outside a post office. It was sad to say goodbye. I hope you liked your new phone Clive. I had a lovely dinner on the plane. Prawn cocktail, chicken and chocolate mousse. I didn't sleep at all. We arrived at 2 am your time 7.30 Indian. It is now 4.30 am (home time). Bombay airport was very crowded. At the place we collected our baggage the staff were throwing the bags off the moving thing into big heaps. So after identifying mine I was a long time climbing over other people's baggage while carrying mine. I spent the $\frac{3}{4}$ hour getting my passport checked while chatting with a young Indian from Cricklewood near Watford. Then by bus to the Domestic airport. Tony's rupees were useful. All the way between airports the roads are lined by shacks often made of rubbish and cardboard with terribly poor families. Probably the least pleasant way of seeing India, especially if it is the first time like some of the people on the bus. The crows haven't changed. It is 80 degrees and very sticky. When it gets too hot I go into the air conditioned lounge until I am shivering. I am feeling so tired and tonight seems a long time away. I am feeling hungry so I'll eat a sandwich and apple. I feel much less shy than in my first visit. I even grabbed someone to carry my case to a left luggage place. This airport is smaller than most railway stations so I should not lose it. I've just realised that I am sitting on a seat belonging to the local army unit. They have just cleared some Indian men off it. Although I don't speak Hindi they have sat down to chat with me so they now know my name and my children's. They have just left to push-start an army motorbike. A black kite has just flown down to the palm tree opposite. I shall find an envelope and post this.

Friday. 12th November. Savera Hotel in Madras

Dear Libby, I am writing this 10 hours after writing the letter in Bombay domestic airport. After a long wait I had a good flight by Indian Airlines with a spicy lunch. I was met here by a travel agent – booked by my Indian Hosts at INSA in New Delhi. We drove for many miles through Madras which is a nice contrast to Bombay as, although it is enormous, the streets are wide and there are many trees. I was relieved to arrive at a beautiful modern Hotel (Savera Hotel) with air conditioning, hot showers comfortable bed and a view over Madras to the distant sea. I tried to avoid getting out of phase – by not sleeping. I showered and ordered orange juice and tea in my room. A chatty lad brought it and asked me for something foreign. So I offered 2 bios. He said You do not smile; you must be angry. If you smile I keep, if not then I don't want. I smiled of course. I went downstairs to the little hotel bookshop and bought a small paperback of Hindu myths. I had a nice chat with the bookseller about Mrs Gandhi. He then asked what did I think of his two young assistants. I said they look cheerful and happy. This was the right answer. He lets them help in the shop so that he can give them a little money without them feeling that they are beggars. He said I should help them

also if I felt like it. So I shoed them out and gave him few rupees for them. I then went for a stroll to remind me of the smells and sound of India. I love it still. But still some things that I think you would not like; it is so sad seeing mothers tucking up their children in old rags to sleep on the pavement. I am now in the vegetarian restaurant waiting for my dinner. Then an early night I think. The very muddled travel agent who was dealing with all my travels knew nothing about my trip to Madurai but had a ticket for Bombay. He has taken all my tickets and will get them sorted and confirmed (all tickets have to be confirmed 24 hours before travel). He is collecting me at 4.30 am to go to Madurai. If there is no one there to meet me he has recommended a good hotel. If this happens I can then go hunting for the University or go birdwatching.

Dear Clive, there is a swimming pool at my hotel so I will go swimming tomorrow. Then I shall probably go on a bicycle rickshaw to the beach. My dinner has just arrived. It is covered with a thin layer of silver metal all over it – like the picture in Mummy's book. I have now finished it. It was vegetable curry with spinach and cucumber. With lemonade. I shall now go and have a good sleep. This evening I went for a walk and fell over a baby calf who was asleep on the pavement. Give my love to Hughie and have some yourself.

Saturday 11th Nov. Written in the Minar restaurant at the top of the Savera hotel.

I am writing this while waiting for my dinner. While looking for the restaurant I heard some Indian music and followed it. As a result I am now sitting at my table overlooking Madras next to a drummer and sitar player. This luxury is very welcome after a hard days tourism. I woke this morning after a long sleep and after breakfast. I walked to the beach (the famous Marina beach) and watched the fishermen. Their boats are made from 3 curved light balsa wood logs tied with thin rope and piled with nets and polythene sails. One came apart in the surf and had to be collected in bits from the shore. Although the sun was hazy I still have my red nose and eyes. I returned about 2.00 to find my travel agent, provided by INSA. He had a ticket for Bombay – provided by INSA- although I have told them I am not going there. He told me that my flight to Madurai is now later so I have to get up 2 hours later - at 6.30. I am making good use of room service which is paid for by INSA. So when my agent came we had coffee delivered. I gave him some UK stamps for his son. Lunch at 3.0 was 2 rice cakes and curds. Afterwards I walked to the big temple near here – the kapaleeswarar temple. The streets are wide and not so crowded as Tirupati. But near the temple the little streets were full of pigs, goats, cows, bikes and cycle rickshaws. There was a very colourful fruit market, noisy with sellers shouting that their fruit was the best. The temple band then joined in. Before going in I had to hand over my sandals to a boy at a shoe stall. I watched others and saw I should pay 1/10 rupee. I only had a 2 rupee note and he said he had no change. A watching man brokered a deal – If the boy could not get change by the time I returned then I would pay nothing. Needless to say by the time I returned he had a box of change (I gave 2/10 in exchange for a beaming smile). In the temple two boys joined onto me and told me stories of the gods. They guided me beautifully around the temple. [Excuse me - my desert of potatoes, with rose petals, nuts and glace cherries covered in silver foil has arrived. The restaurant is completely dark except for the candles at my table and next to the musicians.] During my temple tour I had a long discussion with an engineer from Bangalore on the purpose of education. After this young Ramakrishnaswamy asked if I would like to sit down. When I said yes please I found that this meant sitting on the stone floor It was all dark except for little oil lamps and a big kerosine lamp for the musicians. We chatted about what he was doing at school. Biology and chemistry were his favourites. I thought that the boys would ask for rupees at the end of our temple tour (a wander really) but they just waved and walked off. So I gave them 2 rupees for the tour and for not asking for rupees. The boys' father had left home to work unpaid as a servant in the temple. On the way back I saw a tiny 'shop' (6' x 8') containing a Singer sewing machine. So I asked if they could sew up my small rucksack where a seam had pulled apart. Sorry sir, sewing man gone; back soon - sit down and we will discuss sir. So I had to try to defend Britain for allowing the leader of the so-called Sikh

separatist state of Khalistan to appear on our TV. Very enjoyable. Eventually parted from them all with grinning hugs and a mended rucksack. He wanted 1 rupee; I had 2 only so he tried to give it free so I gave him the 2 rupees. The discussion was with the 'landlord' of the tiny hut – so he called himself. Jupiter is high in the sky over Madras tonight – very impressive. Feeling rather tired so shall go to bed. I hope all your mumps have now finished. Goodnight.

Sunday 12th. First an episode I forgot to mention previously. Yesterday on the way to the temple a man my age stopped me and asked if I could write English. He then took me to the post office to ask me how to write a telegram using few words. He was a Sri Lankan visiting his mother who had had a brain haemorrhage and was paralysed. His money had been stolen and he had to telegram his father to pay for medicines. He could not afford the long telegram the hospital had prepared for him. All rather tragic as I cannot imagine that there are any useful medicines. I shortened the telegram by 30% and lent him £2 towards the cost. He took my address in Tirupati and will send it next week (perhaps). There are no mosquito nets in the hotel but only a few mosquitoes; I hope they behave.

Only got 5 hours sleep last night as I woke in a dream where I was shouting at Tom Heydeman then I couldn't get to sleep again. I got up at 6.30 for the 10.0 plane.

There are no letters from Madurai or Tirupati so this is the end of 1984 letters.

1985. 26nov – 22nd December. My main trip is to Kamaraj University in Madurai for 4 weeks.

This was to teach on a 4-week UNESCO course on membranes for South East Asian participants. My whole trip was financed by UNESCO. The last week was an International Symposium on Biomembranes. I was due to be chairman in some of the sessions and to give a lecture. In the first 3 weeks course I was to be a general guide and to run some practicals on membranes. Other international 'advisers' (my title) did only the minimum, just giving a few lectures. Often these were too advanced so I gave supplementary introductory lectures in the evenings. The same as last year, Dr Rajamanikam was my host.

I flew to Bombay International airport, then by bus to the Domestic airport to Madras and then to Madurai. I had planned to go Tirupati at some point but plans changed. In summary: Bombay by plane to Madras; plane to Madurai; train to Cochin; plane to Madras; plane to Bombay. In Madras I stayed at Madras University guest house. *I had been recommended to stay here and invited myself to visit the biochemistry dept of Prof Shunmugasundaram.*

27th Nov. Dear Libby, Clive and Hugh,

I am writing this on my balcony in the Madras University guest house overlooking Madras beach with a full moon glaring into my tired eyes. I am waiting for Prof. Radhashunmugasundaram. To begin at the beginning dearly beloveds (Kipling). You didn't realise after our quick farewell, that I turned round to wave but you were all getting or administering ice creams - a happy domestic scene. I spent the next hour listening to slightly tedious stories of life in Australia from a man who migrated there in 1960. My seat on the plane was by a window (over wing) next to a little spherical lady who sat wrapped in her sari, cross legged on her seat. A good flight but I only got 2 hours sleep. The film was Chariots of fire. I didn't try to follow it. I listened to a concert of Schonberg's Verklachte Nacht. By the way, Clive, we had a funny meal on the plane. I had chicken legs that looked horrible because they were green inside. They were stuffed with spinach. Bombay was hot and humid. On the little bus between the International and Domestic airports I escorted a girl (about 20) going to Goa. As soon as we got on the bus she pulled out a mirror and scent and started to put on lipstick. An odd combination – battered rucksack + 'civilisation'. I saw the same boy as I saw last year in the airport. He recognised me and came over to say hello (all he could say).

At the baggage check I was next to an Indian who was a student in New York, now returning to visit. Also a jet-black Indian Australian.

I was met in Madras by two staff and taken to the Madras University Guest house on Madras (Marina) beach. Prof Shunmugasundaram and his wife Prof. Radhashunmugasundaram and their son studying Naval Architecture arrived at 7.30. They had been in Sheffield when I was there and knew Rod Quayle very well. They took me to a vegetarian Woodlands hotel for dinner which was in a small private room. After dinner they said that I had passed the test and so would be very welcome in their home. They previously had an American guest who sneered at their customs and food so had decided to check their visitors. "You have passed with your colours flying". Very good food and company. I had heard that Mrs R was an expert on Indian classical music. Her family are all musicians and they are taking me home tomorrow for dinner and will all give me a concert. I had a one hour stroll on the beach earlier this evening to enjoy the sunset. All the fisherman's catamarans that I saw last year have gone. Apparently they were annoying local people. Madras only has rain on 6-10 days a year. Yesterday the 12th day of rare continuous rain finished. So the air was clear and fine now and everywhere is very green. I am nearly asleep (9.0pm) as I have been 24 hours with only 2 hours of sleep.

7.30 next morning. Had a good sleep but disturbed by noisy lorries or the heat or noisy fan. There is no glass in the 'windows'. But I still feel very refreshed I am sitting on the balcony. On the beach opposite is a well, used for the few fishermen to wash - and also the rickshaw cyclists and the crows, goats and buffalo. A nice bit of rural India in the city. At 10am I am going to the University to be told about their research and in the afternoon they want a lecture. They have no electricity at the moment because of severe storms. So my slides are no good. They want it to be low level anyway so I shall just chat about methylotrophs if I can remember anything about them. I shall try to get this posted today so you know I have arrived. It is now 8.05 and getting very hot so I shall go down and find some breakfast. I guess it will be an omelette as usual. So goodbye for now - remember to be kind to Mummy, Clive and Hugh.

28th Nov. Madras. 10pm.

Dear Libby Clive and Hugh. The end of my 2nd day here and I feel as if I have been here for weeks. I spent the morning at the Post Graduate Institute for Biomedical Science where Prof. Radha Shunmugasundaram talked about her work. It was very interesting. She uses extracts from many different plant to cure diabetes, Artherosclerosis and alcoholism. Some of these are on the market. It is all very impressive. Last year a small group of Japanese persuaded the security man to let them into her lab very early one morning; they rushed around photographing all her bottles of herbs etc and then they copied her lab books. They then developed her diabetes cure. Fortunately when she threatened to take them to court they agreed to fund her for the next few years. After a light lunch of rice pancakes I gave an informal lecture to MSc and PhD students which they seemed to enjoy. One of the students was very impressive and he joined us for tea. *We kept in touch and I wrote a reference for him to get a green card to work in America where he is now head of a big cancer research institute.* Mrs Prof R. is head of the biochemistry department that her husband was head of before retirement. When she heard yesterday that I was interested in music she invited me to their home for dinner. So I have just returned from a very memorable dinner/concert. Beside the son I met last night there is an incredibly beautiful daughter who is training to be a professional dancer and Shankar who is a 5th year medical student. He is also a well-known dancer and drummer and singer. He gave me a superb lecture/recital on Indian song, then he and his sister sang a duet followed by a demonstration of difficult Indian dance positions.

After a very good dinner followed by the usual banana Prof. Sh told me lots of stories of the gods Shiva, Vishnu, Krishna etc in a voice that makes Akhtar's sound like whisper. He is 69 and Radha is 46. He had been very active in Gandhi's Quit India campaign. After Independence he was a leader in the movement to prevent Hindi from being the sole national language - as the southern languages are completely different. The result was that all official writing is in Hindi and English. He worked with the famous Pontecorvo in Glasgow and Roper in Sheffield. When I left the house I felt I was saying goodbye to very old friends - all doing namaste and waving good bye and shouts of see

you next year. They are very high caste Brahmins although oddly enough they keep a dog whose food has to be prepared outside the vegetarian house. This is the second year there have been disastrous floods here. The poorer people near the Institute were flooded out so broke into the Institute for shelter. When Radha arrived in the morning it was full of people, cows, goats, buffalo. She then lent them the Institute for the following week. My letter arrived this evening (held up by the bust railways) announcing the title of my morning lecture.

I am now sitting on my balcony looking at the constellation Orion lying on his side over the sea. I must go to bed now. I have to get up at 4.30 am to catch a plane to Madurai. My new family here have invited me back if I have time at the end of the week. I had shown them a lot of our Welsh photos. Shankar was very impressed with you Clive up in the tree in Wales. And Radha said what a beautiful wife I have. Exactly so. They all asked me to send you their greetings, to my kind wife who lets me come to visit them and looks after the children all alone!, and to my strong son Clive and to Hugh. The younger brother asked if he could come and visit you Hugh [*A couple of years later he did come to visit*]. Must go to bed. Goodnight...

29th November. 9.30pm. *Madurai is a famous town in Tamil Nadu in South India. I was teaching on a UNESCO sponsored course on biomembranes in the Kamaraj University, hosted by Dr Rajamanickam.*

Hello again. Writing this from Madurai University guest house. I woke at 4.20 then off to the airport on dark cloudy windy morning. Two staff and a driver came to make sure I caught my plane. I did. I arrived at 7 am on a beautiful sunny morning. Bourgainvillea and other sweet smelling flowers covered all the buildings in Madurai airport. This seemed to be just a control tower and a wall-less barn for collecting suitcases. I was met by a student and taken to a small guest house on the edge of the campus. Very nice small room. My neighbour, also teaching on the workshop came with me for breakfast at the main guest house - a 30 minute walk. They will start cooking at our guest house next week. Rajamanikam was very pleased to see me. The course will be very very very relaxed. I will be just helping all the time and only supervising for two days. So I will have loads of spare time. I will leave for Kerala (holiday) and Tirupati after the conference (15th). Raja is probably going to arrange for me to go to a bird sanctuary on the coast. Did nothing in the morning except chat, then lunch with staff. I remembered a lot of them from last year. I slept in the afternoon and then went for a walk (5 – 6.30). Saw 20 bird species. Up on the nearby Cobra hill (!!) the goatherds (Clive's age) wanted me to 'photo us' with my binoculars. So I showed them close ups of the top of the mountains and then entered the University grounds with 8 disciples and a flock of goats. They all enjoyed saying goodbyeeee in English. After the 30 minute walk I was very tired but I had a good dinner. Must get some sleep. Another easy day tomorrow. I forgot to say, please phone mum to say I have arrived. Tell Claude as well if he is around. Missing you all already (this started in Heathrow !) I am feeling well and enjoying it all. I will try to find postcards tomorrow. I should be able to find the comet (Halley's) tomorrow. I shall definitely go to Tirupati at the end of the stay [*I didn't*].

30th November. Madurai. 9.30pm.

I hope you have not had too long between letters. I finished two days worth last night but missed the post today and tomorrow is Sunday. I find it more difficult to write this year as all the strange and wonderful things are now not so strange. They are nearly as wonderful. My room here is better than in Tirupati. Very quiet no noisy road or trains. I slept till 8.15 this morning and was woken by my teaching colleague, Katyra who is from Bombay. Like me he was concerned that he would not have much to teach but we are realising we need not worry. The first 'pupil' arrived today, a lady lecturer from Thailand. We went to 'work' at 11.15 and did nothing but chatter. Had excellent lunch in the distant guest house and then were driven back. K wanted to help the students make mitochondria. I slept for half an hour then caught the bus into town (30 min ride). At the bus stop a man came up and asked if I needed help. He turned out to be the man whose wedding I gatecrashed here last year. I went to the huge famous Meenakshi temple. It was late afternoon and full of pilgrims and sellers of junk -bangles etc. I looked for a whip to drive them from the temple

but could find none. The big outdoor tank (for religious washing) was covered in swarms of dragonflies and above them the swifts. I absent-mindedly wandered into the temple entrance in my sandals and was quickly driven out to leave them with hundreds of others in the proper place. It was such a relief to walk on the cool stones in bare feet. In two places in the temple there were enormous elephants. If you offered coins these were taken in their trunks, offered to their master to be blessed and then they blessed the giver by patting on the head with their trunks. During sunset I wandered back from the temple through the town, full of people and the smell of jasmine and animals with very few cars so very peaceful. I couldn't find the bus station and did not know the bus I should take. So I asked a man carrying a bible who said he was the minister of the Lutheran church. He was very excited when I told him I had been to Leipzig in Germany where it was founded. He walked me to the bus station and found my bus. It was nearly full or so I thought. I had the last seat but another 37 passengers squeezed on to find standing room. It was another hot 30 minutes before we left. I saved myself a 30 minute walk by getting early near the main guest house and had a dinner – alone but not feeling lonely- except for a servant who stood beside me watching me eat. I had a lovely evening stroll back here where I did some washing, washed my hair and here we are. I got about 20 mosquito bites yesterday and they are developing today. Visible but not very itchy. I am now fighting them off with a burning coil of green cow dung, the smoke keeping them away. When I picked up my towel a praying mantis flew out and settled on my shoulder. It was like the mantis shrimp Clive – the kind that breaks glass. Tomorrow we meet the students – if they have arrived. It all seems so casual. Rajamanikam got his students to write all the letters to the students (and me) which is why they were often vague or irrelevant. I found no postcards in Madurai. Today I got a note from Chowdappa asking me when I was coming to Tirupati, so I shall have to start planning. I have just had a good idea. I can go straight to Kovalam beach in Kerala and then go for a short visit to Chowdappa. I don't really want to spend a lot of time with him.

I hope the boys are being good and that you are getting plenty of sleep I DO APPRECIATE THAT YOU ARE ALL ALONE COPING WITH THEM. I am very grateful. I wish you were here. Sweet dreams. Goodnight.

1st December. 6.30 pm.

Dear family today was the day for welcoming the 12 students. Only half are here, the rest are coming tomorrow. At 10.0 (as stated on the printed programme) I arrived to find chaos. The University had given the department 2 days notice to move to a different building. We sat around in a dusty room with workmen banging and clanging. We introduced ourselves. The Indians usually spoke so quietly and mumbling so I still don't know anything about them. My neighbour Katria is about 40 years old from Bombay. He is very pleasant and, like me, is very bewildered at the lack of organisation. We have formed a team to make sure that something gets done. I had a nice chat with the organiser Rajamanikam. It seems that some of the things I had planned to do he needs for his work so my preparation time was not wasted and his student will get it all going – something I dreaded - working in a strange lab. The food is now excellent. A 5 star hotel brings it in so we have very elegant food and servers who go to a lot of trouble explaining it. I had lunch with our 'students' from India, Bangladesh, Thailand and Iran. They seem more organised than the course. I had fragrant rice, dahl, fish curry and veggies. According to Katria the people of Andhra Pradesh (eg Tirupati) are crazy for pepper and chillies. The food is not so extremely hot here. At 1.30 in the night I was woken by a plague of mosquitoes. In the end I turned the ceiling fan full on and blew them away. I still woke up with many bites but few of them itch. I found that they hid in a curtain covered alcove. In the morning they were bloated and sleepy with my blood so I slaughtered the lot. I hope I am now clear of them. I mended the shower today – every little hole was clogged up. I spent 30 minutes with my knife point clearing it up. I hope this isn't too boring. It works well now. I then mended the lavatory system. I seem to be settling in! I slept for 2 hours this afternoon then went for a walk. Quite a strong wind and lots of cloud so very refreshing. The hills are bare but the plain is planted with all sorts of crops. Lots were irrigated so much of my walk was on the raised banks at

Interesting. Then planned some electrophoresis work with Tara – her name means Star. In the afternoon I went with Katrya and Rafi (from Iran) to Madurai to buy Rafi some sandals. I took a few photos but it was cloudy and it started to rain again. That was ok but the roads were little rivers so all rather miserable. We found a modern shoe shop and sheltered for 30 minutes while Rafi tried on every pair of sandals in the shop. He then found a shop to sell him some beer. This is illegal in Iran and also Madurai. The buses here have 40-2-42 written on the sides. They are typical single decker buses. This means that they have room for 40 seated passengers, 2 crew and 42 standing. We had a 30 minute wait then the usual bumpy ride home. The beer was good when we returned, hot and thirsty. It is very hot and humid but the forecast has started to look better. Of course everyone here is pleased with the rain as it is needed for crops. After dinner we had a lecture from Anwar Hussain from Bangladesh. I have the job of chairman, interpreting questions and answers. When we sent into the lecture there was a crystal clear sky – very odd as it looked frosty but was baking hot. Looked good to see the comet but when we came out it was cloudy.

Today started alarmingly. At 7.30 I was woken by one of the boys with an American (Dick Dillery!) to share MY room. He was bewildered, having had no sleep for 48 hours. I have now arranged for a swap so I will only have to share when my student Kevin Auton arrives. I value my private hideout. He was very grateful – for arranging his accommodation. We had a lecture by the local ‘expert’ on everything to do with photosynthesis. I couldn’t hear him and couldn’t see the slides. It is my turn tomorrow. It cannot be less than outstanding by comparison (I hope). I got Tara doing gels today then finished the session with a lengthy debate on the British in India. I hope to get her to visit Southampton next year. At lunch had the same debate with Raja and Katrya. As I am reading *Freedom at midnight* – about the last days of the Raj I have persuaded them that I am a great scholar. The TV series Jewel in the Crown is on in India! I thought of you watching it on Sunday – if you did. I am now one third through my time here. At 4.0 I went for my usual walk. I go a little further each day. I was welcomed by the ‘hut dwellers’. Up in the rocks I found a beautiful deep green pool. There were 3 young Indians diving very expertly. They were so dark-skinned that they made Kunle appear yellow in comparison. Of course they wanted me to take a photo with my binoculars. Then they got very excited looking through them. As I walked over a causeway a bullock cart stopped, the driver jumped down and gave me a lecture in Tamil on irrigation. Quite amazing what can be done with grunts and gestures.

Dear Clive and Hugh, I hope you can read this, Clive. Today I was chased along a little road by a baby calf and two cows. Three small boys were looking after them by holding their tails. At the end of the lane we all stopped while they laughed at me. Outside my room there is a big tree and lots of bats live in it. They are as big as crows. All the roads in the town were underwater yesterday because of the very heavy rain. Two boys came into my room today to clean it. They used a lot of sticks tied together instead of a broom. I am now going to have hot curry for my dinner now. Can you please phone big granny and tell her that I am well and that I am having a good time. Thank you.

Dear Libs, now finishing this after dinner and lecture and lab. I came home at about 10.30. Had a lovely shower, now almost cool, on a new sheet under the fan having a self-indulgent reminisce about our holiday in Wales. It is amazing what we can remember if we consciously try to picture places and events. I hope you are not finding the boys too much of a strain. [*Note added later: I put you in this position for the next 30 years*]. Also hope Mandy and Mrs Slaney are behaving themselves. Please give them my love. Keep smiling.

5th Dec. Madurai

Today started with my main lecture to the workshop. It went very well I think. Lots of questions which is always a good sign. Rafi understood it so did Surendrakumar. He is a tall thin agile local who has a very staccato accent. He always teases me by ‘Namaste ing’ me every time he sees me. The ‘participants’ as the students are called are working very hard and seem to be enjoying the course. I didn’t do much the rest of the day except check a few gels and have discussions with

research students. As the day was showing signs of sun (it has been mainly cloudy) I walked up the 'mountain'. On the flat plain leading to it the ground is rough pasture and I had a 'chat' with a herder of cows – an amazing sight. At least 30 White or Cattle egrets sitting on or amongst the cattle. I then climbed the hill on paths between the 8' cactus bushes. I saw lots of black and red Indian Robins and many blue-tailed bee eaters. I unexpectedly reached the top and had the sort of experience early explorers must have had. On our side is flat semi-arid plain with many fields with sparse crops. On the distant side was a small river. The result of this was a similar flat plain but covered with emerald green paddy fields, palm trees and lush water meadows. I have just remembered: This morning a car took us to a travel agent where I booked my Cochin-Madurai flight and hotels in Kovalam Beach and Cochin. *Added later: of course the agent lied that there were no inexpensive hotels available so I later found that I had booked the most expensive.* So I felt good with plans all in place. As 5.30 and sunset approached it was time to descend the hill with a super view with the sun setting over the distant hills to the right and a black sky fusing with rain-covered land on the left. As I reached home the rain arrived. After dinner I had a lecture by Shiva on mitochondria – full of errors. I corrected one at the end and this led to noisy humorous debate on Mitchell theory with people leaping up to the blackboard to draw their views. Surendrakumar set up a sort of voting system. I was declared the winner and asked to give a formal lecture on it tomorrow night. I came out of the lecture to find a completely clear starry sky. So with Tara's encouragement we went out to find the comet – next to one of the main stars of Pegasus. Everything is sideways here – with Orion lying on his side. The comet was much bigger and clearer than in UK. I hope you have all seen it. We then instructed another 15 people on how to see it. Surendra got very excited and we all went on to the roof of the guest house for a better view. The Andromeda galaxy was superb.

6th Dec. Kattrya started today with a (too) long lecture on mitochondria and thyroid hormones. Well presented but he gave no conclusions that I remember. Did gels until coffee time. Praba (the caterer's 'boy') always brings me my coffee with a few struggling English sentences. He wants me to show him the comet. Word has got round! After coffee I went to the roof to sit in a delicious breeze under a weak sun to prepare my lecture. Very enjoyable with Kites and Vultures keeping an eye on me. After tea there was a press conference. 15 journalists and Raj, Katyare, Dilley, me and the VC (Krishnaswamy) who insisted on holding hands with me during his speech. I said how wonderful membranes are – I explained what they do then explained how in this context Madurai is the centre of the world and told a funny story of one of my India experiences. Others then did similar. The VC was very pleased. I am being distracted by a sort of hysterical cricket hopping all over me. Mosquitoes are down to only one. My newly washed shirts and underpants are producing delicious cooling spray as the wind blows through them on my makeshift line. Went to dinner at Raja's with Kat. I met the chaplain of the American Theological Seminary and his wife who has just returned from being a post doc with Lehninger (top American mitochondrial person), Good dinner – very hot. Then a wonderful ride through Madurai – as crowded as Tirupati. As you have probably gathered I am having a very good time. Much more sociable than previous two years. Not so sunny but good.

Thinking of you a lot especially during my daily walk in the country. Not had a letter yet but this is not surprising as the post from Madras is badly hit by the floods. Please don't get too used to managing without me. I imagine you are reading this under a pile of squabbling boys. Goodnight.

7th/8th Dec.

Dear Libby, Clive and Hugh. Here we are again. I do enjoy 'talking' to you at the end of every day. I spent much of yesterday after coffee preparing the evening seminar on Michell theory etc. I have never prepared a lecture so thoroughly. In the afternoon there was some sun so I went out to photograph cattle and their egrets. I achieved this but needed the help of the boys and their father who went to some trouble to find their favourite cow. We then all went to the VC's for tea (not the cows). He used to be head of biological sciences and had worked in the Oceanography department

in Southampton (with Prof. Raymont). Tea was served in the garden- an oasis of beautiful flowers and trees. Many of the flowers were in pots piled up on benches – very nice looking. The VC then took me on a tour of the garden. He was very excited to hear that I have seen 47 of the 60 bird species said to be present in the region. I told him about the hawk and he took me to see its nest. With our tea we had cashew nuts and fruit and a cake so heavily spiced it was like cake curry. Someone told the VC that I was an astronomy expert. He came over and offered to find me a telescope but I doubt if he will remember. He has just arranged for the biggest radio telescope in the world to be built near Madurai. Raja gets very nervous at these functions so I had to propose a vote of thanks to the VC. Much easier than in UK. It is easy to say the right thing and I would be forgiven as a visitor if I blundered. At 9.0 I gave my lecture which because of many questions during it lasted nearly 2 hours. I managed to be entertaining – probably compared with their usual lecturers who tend to be self-important or pompous. I had a 5 min powercut in the middle of my lecture during which I continued the lecture in complete darkness while wandering about the lecture room . They kept asking questions and wanting me to guess who was asking. After all the preparation it was gratifying to have such an appreciative audience. Today many staff came up to congratulate me for a ‘famous’ lecture.

Sunday. I had a terrible time killing off the mosquitoes before bed. The 4 bites on my ankle kept me awake. I was then woken by Surendra kumar in his ‘skirt’ suggesting we go up the mountain at 5.30 am. We did. Beautifully fresh with a breeze pink morning sky. We were joined by 3 boys and 2 girls one being very beautiful, also a 30 year old fat wobbly man with a great sense of humour. Very different from my last walk up. All very noisy. Saris were not designed for mountain walking. At the top 4 of us were on top of a rock designed for 3. Surendra insisted on heaving me up and I felt very precarious. Sr is an expert at native medicine. His father was the chief medicine man; he now does research on it at a trad. Medical school. He kept leaping sideways into bushes to grab interesting medical plants. At dinner we asked what were we eating and got just a long list of botanical latin names. I suffered from my poor night at the 9.0 lecture by a pompous Indian (Gnanam) on chloroplast DNA. I slept through most of it. I think I have just killed the last mosquito of the night. No I had not. At last I am due to give my electrophoresis demonstration. The more complex stuff hasn’t worked yet properly and they have already done most of the simpler techniques. Lester Packer, an American jet set scientist turned up today. Yesterday our 55 yr old prof from Kabul (Afghanistan) arrived today. He took 3 days to get here. Had very interesting political discussion with Dick (American), Rafi (Iran) and ‘Kabul’. Being Sunday we had an afternoon off. We all went in a van to the Temple. After this we walked to the palace for a Son et Lumiere show – the same as last year -all very good. The whole atmosphere of my visit is different from previous years because when I am not working there are far more people around. Its very enjoyable. I have used very little film because there has been so little sun. Weather is very pleasant in spite of the cloud. I haven’t given away any of the pens I brought with me yet. Did I mention that your chicken sandwich I ate in Bombay was the best I have ever tasted? My travel sweets are a lovely link with normality.

9th Dec. Madurai. *My research student, Kevin Auton, accepted my suggestion of attending the conference at the end of the 4 week teaching course – as he was planning to visit India anyway.* Before I was up this morning Kevin arrived, tired but pleased to be here at last. I now have to share my room. He is so organised. He has a hair brush, drinking straws, a water de-ionizer, a universal electric plug and an electric coffee maker. That was very welcome. Kevin keeps telling stories of how he (by contrast with most tourists) is experiencing the ‘real India’ by meeting Indian students and visiting their homes. I think he thinks I am too aloof from people – from no evidence at all! He got put right on his second day here. On my walks I had often passed a gang of men breaking rocks in a small quarry by the road. On the 3rd time instead of just waving they came over to ask the usual questions and to have a photo. The day after Kevin arrived I was walking home and the quarry men passed me on top of their lorry filled with broken rocks. They were almost naked and covered in

grey dust, looking very wild. They stopped to give me a lift, heaving me up on top of the rocks. Then I saw Kevin walking along the road and had the pleasure of seeing his face as the wild men lowered me down to the road, then driving off grinning and shouting bye bye chrissh. "OK Kevin – that's the real India for you". After breakfast we went to Lester Packer's lecture on ageing. He looked like an American John Bowen. After the lecture Kevin disappeared so I went to the guest house in case he had misunderstood arrangements. There he was in shorts photographing the house boys before going off to sunbathe! It was my turn to look after the course, half of them today and half tomorrow. The gels still have not worked well but all the students have run some anyway. So we had a long discussion and then a one hour lecture. Then lunch and I let them off. Now going to 9.30 lecture by Rafi in broken French/English. Everyone suffered from a mosquito attack. My cream helped. After returning I was about to go to bed and heard Tamil songs in the distant dining room. The boys plus the hotel helpers Chandran and handsome Prabu were getting ready for breakfast. They called me in and pulled up a chair for a chat. They asked if I liked Indian Tamil music and dancing. When I said yes that I'd seen some in England. "I think you like our friend Prabu?" Yes. He will dance for you sir. So the tables were pushed back and P changed his shirt for a cooler vest and off he went. He invents the steps and postures from the statues of the gods. Very impressive. It takes great control balancing stationary on one leg then leaping into another new position. He wants me to photograph this tomorrow. A huge cricket has just landed on my hand and Kevin is snoring.

Today was a 'typical' hot sunny India like my last visits. So I went to the temple again with Kevin to take photos. Much better than yesterday. The Americans always showed such earnest interest, so inviting lengthy explanations. It all seemed very superficial because they knew nothing about anything. If they really had such interest they could have expressed this a week earlier and read something. We climbed a very steep spiral staircase up the South tall gopuram tower. A good light for photos – hence my visit. After that we wandered very hot and tired around Madurai. I soon succumbed and got an auto rickshaw home. Kevin wanted to haggle the price because he doesn't want to be 'ripped off' by anyone. I think £1.50 is a good price for two to travel by taxi about 12 miles. Kevin seems to have no compassion for the poor people here. But I did enjoy his coffee when we returned. I've just read all your lovely letters again with all the good news (the car is going well). I am not spending much money here I'm glad to say - £3 in 12 days. Kevin's guidebook says that the hotel in Kerala that I am going to is the best hotel in India. That should use up some of my money (only 2 nights). Clive and Hugh seem to be doing well – your letters made me feel a bit homesick. I shall go to sleep thinking of you all.

Monday 16th Dec. *I have missed 4 days out from my Journal. I am writing this from the 'best hotel in India'. I shall just write notes on each day.*

13th. The end of course Symposium is still going on so I did not do much. Many of the speakers are quite eminent and do not like to be told to stop when their time is up. I have been given this job which I do by standing up and ringing a bell. The speakers hate it but the audience always applauds. One afternoon I was bored while listening to a lecture and had an idea – to edit a book on how bacteria get their energy. This was bought on by my experience that many of the speakers had no clue about this. So I planned what authors I would like and what subjects etc. [*I did this on my return and it was published by Academic Press as Bacterial Energy Transduction*]. Sun now out and very hot. I went for a walk at 6.30 this morning. They change the electric supply at 6.00 so the fan stops and I wake up. I saw a Paradise flycatcher, a coucal (cross between crow and pheasant) and a golden backed woodpecker. I skipped the afternoon talks and sunbathed on the roof. I was careful. Kevin overdid it and as a result got flu-like symptoms – he was soon OK. I was supposed to go to town with Surendrakumar and Lingakumar but they couldn't find me so went early. I went for a gentle stroll and enjoyed a glorious sunset - lilac sky and dove grey clouds with a scarlet streak and Jupiter and a new moon seen in gaps between clouds. I next attended a formal cocktail party on the roof. The cocktails were just large glasses of whisky or gin with a bit of lime juice and soda water.

Very good. There were lots of informal speeches with everyone thanking everyone else. Had sentimental chat with JB Boisson (head of bioluminescence lab in Paris) “please please visit us”. Then with Strasser – a very humorous Swiss. Please visit us but you must bring your wife. Then with Prof Papa - an aristocratic Italian, the godfather of bioenergetics. He said nice things about my recent work and invited me to Bari on the East coast of Italy next year. Conferences there are world-famous and by invitation only. So CA has made it (+wife). This was all followed by dinner in the courtyard of the guest house. A sentimental speech by one of the research students “Sir, I have seen your excellent difficult book. But in spite of your fame you sit with us and help us – we are so proud of you sir”. With that he leaned behind his chair and vomited over the Poincietta. I don’t get that treatment at home!

14th Last day of the conference. Nicky (Kevin’s girlfriend) turned up with an unbelievably heavy rucksack. Had a superb lecture on photosynthesis by Govinjee chaired by Strasser. Govinjee is the ‘god’ of photosynthesis. I could have listened all day. After lunch I went up to the roof where I was drowned with a delicious bucket of cold water by Kevin and Nicky. We all went by bus to town. The last few days the meals have all been served under awnings and trees. Very enjoyable. The VC came by to give a gift of a little bronze statue of Ganesh (elephant god of wisdom and fun). We are going to try to set up an inter-university Southampton – Madurai link (*turned out it is not possible without a lot of money being spent*). Before tea Cassy came to my room to chat. He is the youngest goofy serving boy who is bullied by most staff but is always cheerful friendly and helpful. I asked him to write his address using a multicoloured pen. When I saw he could write I gave it to him. He was delighted – “can I say thank you and goodbye”. He must have practiced this as he speaks very little English. He gave me a sloppy hug and went off laughing happily. I went to town with the course people – Rafi, Chairmani etc. Mainly shopping for saris. Poor Hussain (Bangladesh) has 4 sisters and 3 sisters in law. We rushed back to the bus with 2 minutes to spare. I at last found a steel plate shop and bought 2 plates. All I have bought so far. After dinner I went round saying goodbyes. Oddly enough not very emotional. Rafi gave me a small present. Surendrakumar took me to his room to give me a lecture – I must write to him as soon as I get back and please remember my lessons about ‘eye service’ – the practice of ‘cleaning’ the eyes by looking at beautiful girls!

15th. I woke at 6.0 and packed which was very easy with my big suitcase. A car took me to the interstate bus. To buy a ticket you gather around the conductor shouting and waving handfuls of rupees. I kept losing my place in the ‘queue’. The driver insisted I went with him to witness him locking the boot door on my big suitcase. He came and jabbered at the conductor and everyone roared with laughter. Apparently he told them that I was saving money by carrying all my family in my suitcase. Had a hot steamy dusty bus ride. It should have taken 7 hours but took 8.5. We developed an oil leak so waited an hour in a sweltering bus station. I woke from a doze to see a bus driving by with my name ANTHONY on the side. It was not a hallucination but an advert. Mine is a common name in Kerala. My bus ride cost £2 for me plus my heavy case, for which I needed 8 tickets all provided from different books and with 5-10 punched holes in them.

I lived off bananas, shortbread, travel sweets and Limca. Wonderful scenery between Tamil Nadu and Kerala. When I arrived at the Kovalam Beach hotel I found it cost £30 not £20. The daily allowance I was paid for the Madurai course will cover this and all other expenses easily. I have my own walled cottage on the beach with a sunbathing garden. All in a very beautiful setting. I then had a glorious seaside sunset followed by shaslick (skewered meat) and rice sitting by the little swimming pool.

16th December. I had a wonderful night. Woke to the sound of women on the beach calling our Banana, Papaya etc. I watched the fishermen from 7.0 – 9.0 then had omelette for breakfast. Went for a walk on the sandy shore among the rocks and palm trees swaying in the breeze. I met tourists Anne & Thomas. They are music students at Leeds. I took them in and wrote an introduction to the guest house in Madurai so they might get some cheap accommodation. We then went for lunch in a small restaurant next to some paddy fields. Cheese and veg stuffed chapati

followed by wonderful fruit salad £2 for all three of us. On a distant part of the beach near the lagoon I was stopped by a young beach 'salesman' offering me fish for dinner in his mother's beach restaurant. It sounded cheap and ok so I agreed. You pay in advance for them to go and get the fish. I promised to arrive at 8.0. I forgot it would be dark by then and I found there was no road. So I took my torch and walked in roughly the right direction until he appeared out of the darkness to escort me to the 'restaurant'. A primitive little hut lit by a single light bulb where I was the only customer. He bought a bowl of rice and lemon juice and a plate with 3 large grilled black fish complete with heads. No utensils so I sent him off to get a spoon for the rice then tore the fish apart. It was wonderful. He (Sheshi) and 2 friends came and watched me and interrogate me. An altogether odd dinner. After talking an hour I paid. We had negotiated 30 rupees but it was so good I paid 40. He finds a customer, agrees a price then goes and gets the food then pays rent for the hut so his mother can come and cook. He guided me back down the beach while I tried to show him the comet. It is hot here with very high humidity so it would be unbearable if not next to the sea. A distant thunderstorm in the night looked very dramatic. Tomorrow morning I have planned to start with a boat ride on the lagoon at 8.00. I am enjoying it very much here and wish you are here to share it. Goodnight. Home in 5 days. Chowdappa has not turned up – he said he would if I sent him the address [He was then working in Kerala]. I have decided to stay here an extra day instead of staying the night in Cochin before getting the plane back across to Madras. Christmas shopping tomorrow.

17th – 12th. I went to bed early but woke up feeling very hot and humid. A powercut had turned the A/C off. I found a torch to find a banana and then to sleep again. Started to think about the journey home and this woke me completely. I forced myself up at 7.45 as I'd promised to be at the lagoon for a boat ride at 8.30. I ignored breakfast. When I arrived there was no sign of the boat 'salesman'. Eventually I was approached by an older man – "boat sir". Sorry I have already arranged a boat. "That is my boat sir come along". It turned out that my 'boy' had overslept and the boat man had cashed in. I later learned that the person who catches the tourist gets 25 rupees, the boatman gets 25, the person coming to chat gets 10 and the owner gets 10. Anyway it was very good value. The lagoon is separated from the sea by a beach with coconuts and stretches for many miles. We went in a 20' open boat punted with a long pole. Coconuts are cut off the trees by a 'monkeyman' with a hatchet. They are split open and the centre part used for oil. The outer husks are tied into bundles and floated out onto the lagoon and allowed to sink. After a year they are hoisted up, now consisting only of fibre, the flesh having rotted. Of course this means the lagoon smells of rotting vegetation. The fibre is dried and beaten with clubs by gangs of old women and beautiful young girls. This results in light fluffy fibre which is wound into long ropes on special spinning wheels. This all goes on in a series of small villages amongst the coconut palms. We dreamily punted along watching sandpipers, little plovers, kingfishers, egrets etc. We stopped at a small village where I had to fend off a hundred requests of 'one pen sir'. A man rushed up to us clambered up a tree to hack down a coconut which he then hacked open to give me a wonderful drink. I took a nice picture of a school where the kids all poured out when they saw me arrive. In the boat as we passed a group of girls busy coconut bashing they all jabbered and pointed at me. Apparently they were asking why I looked so sad. They were told that I was very tired but I was happy to be there with them. So they all waved and giggled at me; I waved and giggled back. While walking back from my boat ride Seshi (fish restaurant) saw me and kept me company on the way back. I took a sort of Lawrence of Arabia photo of him on top of a sand dune. He explained how he planned to start a proper restaurant – like a character in a Naryan short story ("The Fish Seller" perhaps).

I got back feeling very hot and hungry. I object to spending money on food so I walked 10 yards up the beach and bought 4 bananas and a pineapple for 5 rupees (30p). I ate all the small bananas and half the pineapple. Delicious. I spent the rest of the day sunbathing, swimming and reading 'A New Dominion'. The water was like a gentle soothing massage (I am guessing). I then had

a sleep, showered and changed into my best clothes and had a pot of tea by our hardly used swimming pool. I then set off shopping, feeling sad to be leaving such a lovely place but excited to be going home soon. I went into the Kashmiri shop and had an hour long chat and a survey of vast numbers of jewels. At one point I had 8 rings on my fingers. Eventually I chose one to match your eyes (aquamarine I think). We had a long discussion whether Kashmir would have been better in Pakistan instead of India and whether South Indians should be encouraged to speak official Hindi. Then down to our cottage restaurant where I am, as always, the only customer. I had chapatis and masala fish – very spicy. It was very good but not as good as Seshi's. The manager asked where I had eaten the previous night. He said I should bring Seshi here to see how it should be done. I could hardly say that vice versa would be more appropriate. After dinner I went for a walk on the beach among the rocks with the waves pounding. The moon then disappeared behind very black clouds and 3 minutes later there was a flash of lightening and all the lights went out in the fishermen's huts (just like the Vosges) and an inch of rain fell on me in about five minutes. In the 15 minutes walk back I was almost dissolved. Now all my best clothes are dripping from their hangers. It is drier in the air today so I soon dried out. I must pack, change travellers cheques and arrange transport for tomorrow. I am a bit burnt – not enough to hurt but enough to remind me to be sensible. It is now 9.45 so I shall go to sleep thinking that I will be seeing you all soon.

18th Dec. Kovalam.

I am writing this on the roof of a hotel in noisy Madras. It is difficult to re-create the atmosphere of Kerala when I am a busy 13 hour journey away. My last day was perfect in all available ways (no Libby, Clive or little Hugh to wake up to). I got up late, expecting another wet day after last night but it was a beautiful warm fresh sunny morning. I did some washing, ate some pineapple and potted up to the outdoor restaurant. To my amazement sitting there was Herr Doktor Professor Marty Klingenberg the eminent German I had such trouble shutting up when I was chairman during the Symposium. I had told him that Kovalam was highly recommended so he had decided to come. We sat for an enjoyable two hours while he told me his travel troubles. He had decided to move from the beach cottage to the main hotel up on the cliff. I then had a gentle time sitting in the breeze under the trees nibbling more pineapple and reading. I then almost completed my packing. The previous day I had arranged with Seshi that I would have lunch at his 'restaurant' at 1.00. I walked along the beach to sit on the wall by the fishermen's huts. Eventually someone came up to offer me fish. No thanks I am supposed to be eating with Seshi. OK sir I will find him. Eventually his little brother appeared to escort me to the restaurant where Seshi and a friend were just opening up. Just me again. Nicer in the light. Three small masala fish again. But being watched by staring fisher boys tends to lead to loss of appetite. Just outside the fisher boys were pulling in their empty nets singing a sort of pulling song. I took a picture of them all. Seshi then washed the plates in the sea with the sand bringing back camping memories. I invited Seshi to dinner. "No problem". Is that yes? "yes no problem". I then went off through the trees to another small Kashmiri shop. I had no money with me so I promised to come back. He said yes sir but with a hopeless look. I felt cruel but he only had a few things and none were especially inviting.

I finished packing then went for a final swim. I was joined near the posh beach by 5 students (studying commerce) with a log float. We found we were 2 Christians, 2 Muslim and 2 Hindu. For some reason we all found this very funny. After I had swum out a little way I suddenly found a log catamaran and boatman – Krishna- beside me. "you promised you would come on a boat trip". "No, I promised that if I came on a boat trip it would be with you". "Ok sir I think you are a lawyer". So I climbed in or rather on to his 4 logs and off we went for 45 minutes gently paddling about the warm clear sea. I told him not to trouble paddling over to the other beach – the usual route- but to just drift about. So we did this with me lying peacefully on the logs and him at one end smoking. He has an 18 yr old body joined to a 30 yr old sun/wind baked face. Very witty good English. 3 brothers. Father dead. Four of them run the boat, fishing in the mornings and taking tourists for a paddle in the afternoon. So far I was the only customer that day. It cost 20 rupees for me. When we

got near the shore I called to a rather pompous fat Indian who kept telling me about his successful business “inspired by you great British” that he should try it as “it is better than the Oxford boat race”. He got very excited at my brilliant wit. I told him it was 60 rupees if he wants to be a generous gentleman. Done sir he said and wallowed onto the boat, paddled away by one of the brothers. Ok that’s 50/50 I said to Krishna getting a great heap of giggles in response. I had no money in my swimming trunks so Krishna came over to my cottage. He tried to charge me only 20 rupees as I “am good friend”. So I went the other way and gave him 40. Then had the usual showing of family photos and a gift of sweets. He gave a little hug and off he went. I had a shower then went up to the better Kashmiri shop where I was lured in by the usual offer of Kashmiri tea.

I suddenly realised it was only 10 minutes to sunset so I rushed off for a last photo. I took a few random photos but no sunset as the only cloud in the sky obscured it. I went to the convenient shore mosque to meet Seshi in his best silk shirt and Lungi, looking very dignified although rather nervous. We found my restaurant did not open till 7.45 and he was too nervous to go to the main hotel restaurant. I ordered Kerala fish curry and he had his usual fired fish. He had a little chat with the restaurant manager comparing their food and customers. Of course they both concluded I was their best customer. We then went back to my room with a Limca drink. I wanted him to write his name and address but he said he would write first. I later found this was because he “cannot write cleanly”. He had evolved a phonetic alphabet that was not very efficient. So he dictated his rather meagre address – Sheshi, Raja road, Kovalam. He obviously enjoyed his dinner. I told the manager that he had a small restaurant further up the beach. He asked sheshi “is our fish good?” “Not as good as mine sir”. We returned to my room to show him family pictures. He grabbed Clive’s framed picture and put it on the bed beside him. Can I keep this please? Don’t you want the one with Clive and Hugh? He looked very embarrassed and said yes. He really wanted them all but I was a friend and not a tourist so he could not ask for anything more! So I gave him both. Why pictures of my sons and not of me?! We walked back to the beach mosque where his brothers were waiting. After vows to write, send pictures etc he disappeared into the darkness as if being swallowed by the noisy invisible breakers. I went back, collected my wallet and returned to have spiced Kashmiri tea while being shown priceless carpets etc. I bought a few small items with my Access bank card. Later the youngest of the 4 brothers came down to my room to give me his address so that I can call in to see them when I am in Kashmir! I settled my hotel bill and then to bed.

19th. Up at 6.00 to go with Marty K to Trivandram station. Very sorry to be leaving but longing for home. Had a beautiful taxi ride. Saw a lot of road making. Boys take big rocks from piles by the side of the road, smash them into fist sized lumps then chip them by hand into sugar lumps. MK insisted on stopping to buy oranges. An excellent idea but he was outraged at the price (60p/kilo) so he made us visit stalls 200 yards apart but the prices were all the same. So breakfast was half a kilo of oranges. The train – first class- was half empty so I found a good window seat by a cooling fan at 32 degrees for the 6 hour beautiful journey to Cochin through miles of coconut palms, green paddy fields, egrets and beautiful farm workers – girls in bright coloured saris and boys in coloured lungis or loincloths. We got a taxi to the Casino hotel near the airport where MK booked in. He made a big thing of inspecting his room to check that the pillows were clean etc. I had a lovely wash then had a delicious lunch before going by taxi to the airport. After half an hour I was booked in then, while in the security queue, I heard my name over the loudspeakers. My flight should have been Cochin to Madurai to Madras on the same plane. I found the travel agent had not confirmed the Madurai/Madras part of my flight so I would have to get off in Madurai, check if there was room on the Madras flight and then get on (carting my baggage around) again. I rescued my luggage from the Madras pile and transferred it to Madurai. In security my knife was found (always OK till now) so I had to go back to my luggage to put it in there. I was called over and told to wait in case a seat was available for complete journey to Madras. Three minutes before closing the gate I was told a seat was available so I had to move my luggage again. I was rushed through security to the boarding exit only to find the plane was nearly an hour late.

I had a good flight to Madurai, flying low over Cobra Hill near the University. I enjoyed the sunset over the most beautiful airport in the world. In Madras the temperature had dropped to 30 degrees. Two students were waiting for me. Had I received the telegram? No. Prof Shunmugasundaram's mother in law had died and the guest house was full so they took me to a small Indian hotel in the centre – complete with two types of cockroaches and mosquitoes. I am writing this while sticky and covered in dust. I wish I am going home tomorrow. I phoned Shunmug... and got his singer son who will try to meet up tomorrow although it is the 10th day after death and special rituals are observed. He said he would ring late in the morning – 8.00! I had a crude supper of toast and greasy omelette. The hotel seems quiet except for noisy fan, leaking loo, shuffling cockroaches, whining mosquitoes, quarrelling 'boys' and gargling neighbour. Soon be home to shuffling gerbils, whining wife and quarrelling boys – goody. That reminds me I must say again Thank you Libby I really appreciate all your hard work patience tolerance of my irresponsible absence. Goodnight.

20th. Madras. Granpat hotel. An odd unnecessary day in India. I had a nosy night with staff crashing about mosquitoes and temple wailing at 5.00. Temp 30 degrees; humidity 87%. The AC does not work but the noisy fan does and lets me know it is working. I started the day by sitting on the roof eating toast and drinking coffee with a very busy road and noisy building site below. Not my favourite aspect of India. I decided to walk to the Air India airline office to confirm my flight. It took 20 minutes to get directions – partly a long job because of my odd insistence on walking. I walked past the museum, very pleased to have found it only to see it is closed on Fridays. I waited for 20 minutes in the India Airlines office with its cool marble floor only to find that my ticket is Air India next door. Another wait of 30 minutes. A young man came and sat down beside me and told me he name is John Prabhakar. His mother is Indian Protestant Christian and father is a Hindu – converted for marriage but refuses to go to church. His father is the Director for Labour in Malaysia. John is going to visit him. He is an unpaid social worker supported by the church. He earns his keep by playing his guitar at the church. He invited me to lunch so we went by autorickshaw to a non-veg restaurant. We ate chicken biriani off a palm leaf, often in complete darkness during frequent power outages. John plans to come to UK to raise funds from Christian Aid to start an orphanage. He is only 18 but looks older. He insisted on paying for lunch – he said I could pay when in Southampton. He delivered me to the famous Connemara hotel where visitors with a good appearance can use washrooms so I had a good cool down and wash. [*Later visits I often stayed here*]. Then off to find the typical mirrored jackets for the boy along the busiest road in Madras- the famous Anna Salai. Not available – only to be found in Rajasthan. Very hot and thirsty, I hired an auto to get back to my hotel but he didn't know the way so we had a hot noisy tour for 30 minutes till we found it. I ate an orange, drank 3 glasses of water and collapsed asleep.

I woke with 3 enormous mosquito bites on my arm. Put some cream on them, went to the roof for tea then down to wait for Shankar (the singer son), coming to pick me up at 5.00. While waiting outside I got talking to an old Indian English graduate. He helped me to negotiate hire of an autorickshaw for the whole of the day tomorrow so that I can go to the beach and enjoy my last day and then get to the airport. It was only 70 rupees (£4). Now finishing this while sitting on the roof eating an egg sandwich. I'd intended going to bed but it is too noisy. Shankar phoned to say he would be coming at 6.0 so we I went for a walk until then. The hotel is next to 2 main roads but when we walked down a side road we were back in village India with cows, pigs, old women, children, village water pumps, old men sitting on string beds (Charpoys). There were a few big modern houses mixed in with cleanly dressed boy playing badminton. Also The Bethel Boys Home – more like Babel boys home. On the way back I took a photo of the general muddle to the delight of all the girls and ladies. I intended to take a clever picture with the old village and the new houses together to show the contrast but I failed because by then I had the usual gang of boys leaping into the picture – wrecking my picture and the badminton. They were very funny, 5 of them following me, gabbling at great speed and imitating camera crew, and demanding photo photo sir. Very

funny, I obliged and then they demanded rupees. I patted my pockets to demonstrate that I had none but there were some clinking coins which I gave them 4 pence worth. They went off shrieking to the nearby sweet stall. I can please more people here in 5 minutes than I achieve all day at home! Shankar and his brother arrived at 6.0 to take me to their home. I was rather apprehensive as it would be in mourning. No need to worry. I had a long noisy cheerful explanation. She died at age 85 after a long successful family life. The house was receiving visitors continuously to celebrate this. The family had to go out distributing presents to other Brahmin families.

[In the restaurant where I am writing this new arrivals are trying to push me off the table. But the waiters seem scared to ask me to move. I previously tipped Raja generously for heaving my luggage about so I get smiing Namastes from him the moment I appear.]

Shenkar was careful to look after me, giving me a special celebration drink of coconut milk with brown sugar, orange and guava. I had to listen to a long diatribe by prog Shunmugasundaram about Krishnaswamy; he says that this VC at Madurai is a 'political' Brahmin and expects him to be jailed for corruption within two years. (*He was*). Shankar then drove us all to the shops and dropped off his parents. Many fond farewells and an invitation for all of us to go and stay in their flat by the sea near Madras. The two boys came back to my room for a chat – very good company. Wished me a happy Christmas when they left. Tonight will be my last sleep for some time – assuming I can sleep. Five days to go till Christmas. Goodnight.

My birds list Madurai 1985

House crow, Pariah (black) kite, Brahminy kite, Myna, Swallow, Black winged stilt, Paddy bird, Cattle egret, Drongo, Kestrel, Shikra, Collared dove, Palm swift, White breasted kingfisher, Indian roller, Babbler (common), Purple sunbird, House sparrow, Little egret, Black winged kite, Grey partridge, Little ringed plover, Common sandpiper, Wood sandpiper, Little brown dove, Koel, House swift, Chestnut headed bee eater, Ashy crowned finch lark, Yellow wagtail, Indian pipit, Indian robin, Pied kingfisher, Common kingfisher, Ashy swallow shrike, Brahminy myna, Spotted owlet, Blue rock pigeon, Large pied wagtail, Golden oriole, Coucal, Golden backed woodpecker, Paradise flycatcher.



During a lecture in the Symposium on Membranes. Front row: 3rd left is Prof Venkaiah from Tirupati, Me, Katyare who was my main friend and helper. I visited him in Bombay in 1986. Last on the right is Rafi from Iran, one of the 12 participants in the Unesco sponsored course.

My itinerary: Flights - Heathrow, Bombay, Madras (Chennai)(top right), Madurai; bus to Kovalam in Kerala near the southern tip; train to Cochin on West coast; fly to Madras; Bombay, home.



View from Madras University guest hou



Prof. Shunmugasundaram and wife



Wearing the crown given to him on his 75th birthday



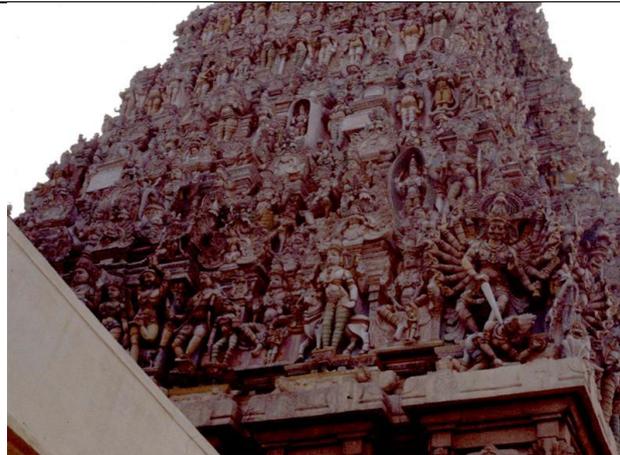
Kamaraj University guest house



Biochemistry staff. Rajamanikam on right



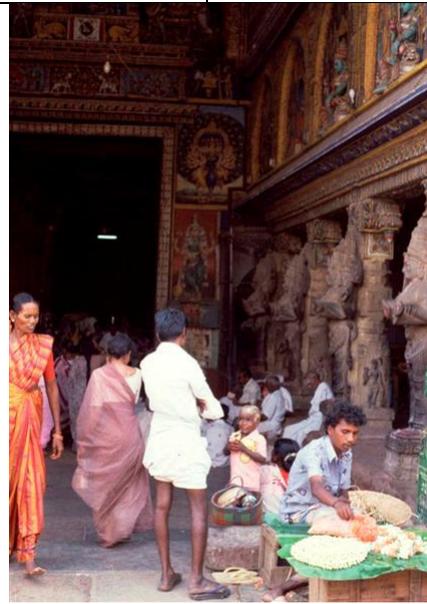
Madurai



The temple entrance (Gopuram)



The famous Meenakshi temple
Madurai



Beggars and food sellers at
entrance



Ganesh