

Tirupati, India, January 2003

Italics indicate notes during writing - often from a few days after the actual diary entries.

Tuesday 7th January. I am at last starting to write - at 10 in evening while listening to cellist YoYo Ma playing 'Tango'.

Saturday 4th January. I should have felt more prepared than usual as I had all of the Christmas break with very little other work to finish. But I had set myself the task of finishing last year's India diary with pictures before setting off again. This of course took longer than intended but it was good to have finished it. The day before leaving I heard from the finance company dealing with last year's PQQ conference that the finances were settled and they would be sending me the balance (my 'fee', expected to be about £700) which would be higher than they expected (but almost exactly what I had calculated) of about £2,000. So I felt a little less self-indulgent in paying a car to take me to Heathrow. Leigh had offered to drive me but I felt the unkindness of accepting outweighed the kindness of the offer. Had a really wonderful evening with Hugh and Mary with Murali, Libby and Hugh so felt even less like going off abandoning my great family and friends than usual. Anyway, the car was on time and we had a one and quarter hour perfect journey, the last 6 miles being in driving snow, making the prospect even more enticing of the next morning on the beach in Mahabalipuram.

After checking in I was told that I could have saved myself a lot of trouble and could have taken bag plus laptop [I had wrapped laptop in bubblewrap and towel at the bottom of my bag]. They have changed the rules as a result of so many men complaining that women were allowed on with a heavy handbag as well as a normal bag. I then bought 3 heavy books, water and chocolate, weighing at least 3 kilos extra.

The flight was delayed one hour while all the baggage was unloaded to remove bags of two passengers who had decided not to fly. Their defection had given me the advantage of an aisle seat and adjacent empty seat. The window seat was soon taken by an Indian business studies professor from Princeton who was good company. Meals were good and film was the first I have seen complete on a flight - Matt Damon in *The Bourne Conspiracy* - much better than the book. In Chennai I was very quickly through immigration, direct to rapid money change to collect my bag which was first off and out into the steamy night to meet a smiling Surya to drive direct to Mahabalipuram. But the plan worked perfectly except that when I got out of the airport at 1.30 in the morning there was no Surya. Fortunately I had taken my own mobile (thanks for suggestion) and so could call him at his hotel in Tirupati: his usual reply 'welcome to the Kalyan Residency' was met by 'what about welcome to India in Chennai?'. He had somehow confused the days. Great hotel, the Breeze, owned by Murali's father and uncle, welcomed by very happy smiling staff and a good room etc. I was woken after 3 hours sleep by a gentle knock on door which was the Hindu newspaper being delivered. Slept again till 10 and got up for nice breakfast in time for Surya's arrival at 11.00 which was Indian time (1.00). We decided to go to Mahabalipuram anyway which should have been less than two hours drive (including the drive through Chennai) but the driver knew a better route than the obvious and so we took an hour longer. The Golden Sands was as good as before, with a room looking out through the bougainvillea and swimming pool to the palms on the beach. We had beer and veggie/chillie sandwiches and walked the two miles along the beach arriving at sunset in M itself. We immediately turned around and walked back, a distance covered half in the dark on the edge of the crashing waves, which seemed at least twice as long as the outward walk. We drove in our car to the town for dinner which was fish and chips in name but wonderfully better than it sounds (spicy fresh fish with silly little chips

covered in pepper). Surya of course was stuck with veggie rice with gobi masala (cauliflower). The beer always tastes better than in UK - probably because the need for it is greater (Kingfisher made in Bangalore). After a good night to the sound of crickets and surf and the snores of Surya, who had not slept for 24 hours, we had a wonderful breakfast of puri bhaji (inflated bread which cools to a deflated oily tasty chapati plus sweetish potato and pea curry). Surya then explored the new computer while I strolled in the sun on the beach and then swam in the pool (!) with the kites circling overhead. After lunch of dahl and roti (flat tandoori bread) and beer we drove the nearly five hour trek by way of Kanchipuram and Tirrutani to Tirupati. The car had a dying engine that could only give us 45 km per hour. The tiresomeness for the long very bumpy hot ride was balanced a little by the pleasure of the countryside for much of the way through rice paddies, palm trees and distant hills with all the happy reminders of rural India, winnowing on the road, goats, cows, carts and everywhere colourful peasants singing as they worked (sorry got carried away).

We arrived at seven, after sunset, and a nice nostalgic drive through the outskirts of Tirupati, in the guest house where Prof Sreenivasulu (my host, Head of virology) had arranged for me to have my usual room set back by itself from the road with a nice veranda etc. We drove immediately into the edge of town to buy string for clothes line, bottled water, grass broom, clothes hangers and phone card which came with a free plastic jar for putting food in. Surya then went off and I gently slogged through the chores to make the place suitable for life for 4 weeks [cleaning cupboard, removing renovating and replacing the door], sweeping clean the floor with the new broom etc.

I then phoned Imran as promised in Chittoor to say I had arrived and allowed myself the luxury of phoning Libby again. Although the place is basically the same as the first visit twenty years ago, it feels so different because of the phones and of course because I know so many people here. I rather miss the times of being alone and will have to manufacture some lonely time.

Tuesday, January 7th. After a good night woke to a sunny morning and a smiling welcome from the grumpy cook lady who offered me all sorts of interesting items for breakfast (idlies, dosas, puris) but it turned out that all that was available was bread omellette. This took half an hour to produce while I read last weekend's Sunday times colour magazine about Gangs of New York (slightly surreal in my simple circumstances). They are building extra floors onto part of the guest house including my bit but so far there is no noise or dirt problem. This is part of a re-conditioning process which includes tiling the corridors and providing comfortable chairs in the dining room with pretty patterned teacups and saucers to replace the grimy chipped relics of the past. The tea (always provided for me in two teacups) was spicy sweet milky tea (tea masala) and very good. Half way through Imran appeared and was provided with tea and then Surya and then ten minutes later Nagaraju (final year biotechnology PhD student whose village I once visited). So lots of happy re-unions. Surya and Raju went off on Raju's new Honda motorbike leaving Imran to grovel in gratitude for his England football shirt. It fits perfectly and does look great. He thinks the side with the red cross makes him look like some classy medic and so it does. Prof S soon arrived on his ageing scooter to welcome me. He still thinks that I am unable to do anything for myself but that is nice as I know he can even achieve what he promises. He soon returned with 4 towels which was all that I had forgotten the day before. We had a brief chat about my plans and then I was left with the (mainly) pleasant business of letting Imran on my computer - with dire warnings that no programmes must be installed etc [last year his 'Welcome from dear friend Imran' that he put on the front led to me re-installing the hard disk]. We had excellent typical burning veggie lunch in the guest house and then wandered through the campus to the Virology Department, Imran diverting to the town club Internet café. I immediately bumped

into Sateesh, a final student from last year who is now a 'teaching assistant'. He is one of the small group that I had got to know well, with 'Murali' Sudarshan and Subhash. After a brief chat with Sreenivasulu I was formally introduced to the students and then left to chat so that they "would be accustomed to my strange way of speaking".

So I gave them a chat about my previous visits and gradually got them to be willing to answer questions. They are more responsive than last year's group and I got them to teach me a few more Telugu words which I have already forgotten. 'Speak louder was one of these'. I then saw the teaching assistants for a few minutes, then tea with S (= Prof. Srinivasulu) who then drove me back to guest house, arriving at same time as Imran. He had discovered that there is a boating lake on the outskirts of Tirupati so we set off to hunt for this. No auto driver knew it so we got an auto to edge of town and then asked. Each year the town spreads further out, fortunately leaving the University area more or less unchanged. The auto took us to a new Tirupati Urban Development Association (TUDA) open air 'crafts park'. This was potentially interesting but Imran was taken up with finding the boats which eventually were discovered further down the road - big plastic pedalos. I disappointed him by my lack of enthusiasm for pedalling these and persuaded him to wait until Gopi came again with him in a few days time so that we could go together. I tried to take some video photos from the auto and some straight pictures. The auto ones could be quite good if I sort out how to get going quickly but the delay time in ordinary photos means it is impossible to do brilliant snapshots. When Imran had arrived in the afternoon at the guest house he brought a soft chilli pizza which was good. This meant that he did not want to eat in the evening but then changed his mind and we called in at the luxury Bhimas Residency hotel for a snack in their coffee shop - veggie cutlets covered in chilli sauce. After we returned Subhash turned up (last year's microbiology student who had written a lot during the year). So I had to keep talking, exhausted after a day of keeping up with Imran's ceaseless chatter. Fortunately Imran had the sense to leave, for the bus ride home to Chittoor (90 minutes) and I could be polite to Subhash and plod through photos on computer. He is doing a research assistantship in the veterinary college opposite the guest house. He was quite hard work as he sits in respectful silence most of the time. When I said that he was very quiet he told me he was "here for darshan of my guru" [Darshan is when you go to the god for communion with him or her]. I've often thought that being a god could be tedious. He immediately took a hint that I must get to bed early and so I then spent two hours writing this diary. I was half asleep later when my aggressive text message shrieked at me with a message from Clive saying sorry he didn't come to say goodbye. So I phoned him and had a nice chat.

Wednesday 8th January. After a very disturbed night was woken at 7.00 by Surya, on duty in Kalyan Residency to say he was coming to breakfast at 8.15. It is now 8.30 and he is not yet here. I went for a short stroll in the early morning sun in the wild part of the university grounds in the paths between the thorn bushes and Eucalyptus trees and saw a lot of the usual birds who came up to show off that they remembered me: mynahs, Koils (cuckoos), crows (of course), drongo flycatchers, huge crow-pheasant and babblers. I hope to be able to photograph these later. I have just returned and am waiting for Surya and breakfast so will stop this now and do a few minutes preparation of my first lecture, due at 10.00 this morning.

I am now writing this on Thursday evening while listening to the CD Leigh made for Imran and struggling to remember what happened yesterday.

Surya did not turn up so had breakfast then prepared lectures. On bioenergetics and microbial physiology. We had the usual communication problems; they reply yes to questions but rarely tell me no. So I have found that if I ask if they know something a yes means yes but the alternative is a blank stare as if they cannot confess to ignorance. The best thing is to ask a direct factual question [today's was "do you know what NAD is? "YES SIR -

NICOTINAMIDE ADENINE DINUCLEOTIDE”, shouted in unison]. They are a nice responsive lot. After the lecture a student reminded me that “it is your responsibility to mark the register”; “OK, I pass this responsibility to you to mark it”. “I am very sorry sir but that is too big a responsibility for me, you must do it”. It is a good way to gradually recognize the names even if I cannot remember them for long. I walked through the campus down to the nearest internet café, meeting Murali on the way; he is the boy who worked in the guest house as a general dogsbody the year before last, always very gentle and wanting to find things to do for me. He now has a permanent job as the senior gardener in one little bit of campus of which he is very proud. The internet (15 rupees per hour) was very slow and I took half my 90 minutes deleting unwanted messages. I managed to prepare the afternoon’s lecture while slowly plodding through my messages. In the afternoon I fought off the demand that I should be given a scooter lift back and so had a nice walk through the back of the campus reminding myself of the commoner birds. Sudarshan (final year student friend from last year) soon arrived with two friends to say hello and to get me to agree to see another friend to give advice about coming to UK. So I think I have arranged that he comes Friday morning.

I then walked all the way through tirupati to Surya’s. I do prefer to have some time without friends so that I can stroll, relaxed and with no aims. My little project was to explore the use of my new wide angle lens. It is excellent for the obvious things but when I entered the town I used the normal camera so that I could zoom in on the religious parade. This was the daily walk of the local god (Sri Govindaswamy) under his tasselled umbrella, all mounted on a rough platform carried by small staggering devotees and preceded by the two temple elephants. It was almost dark but I still got some good pictures I think. Had really good dinner at Surya’s with all family. That means with Surya and his father at the table and his mother and sister swarna waiting till we had finished before having theirs in the kitchen. While waiting I managed to get finally up to date on my email. Swarna is due to have a baby in 2 months time which is why she is living with her mother, who has had her enormous protruding teeth removed and replaced with a perfect false set which do look very nice. Poor Surya is working nights and had had only 3 hours sleep so he was pretty inert and I left early, returning in an auto driven by an Indian Schumacher, all very exciting once I turned off my imagination and joined in the spirit of it. I then spent 2 hours playing with photoshop on my recent pictures.

Thursday Jan 9th. I went to bed late, had a restless night, disturbed by very heavy early morning traffic at 5.30 and then by the cook with tea at 7.00. So I gave up and prepared lectures and struggled with my third consecutive bread omelette breakfast. Imran and Gopi soon turned up (as warned the previous day) and immediately grabbed the computer to play tricks with photoshop. In the afternoon we went with Surya back to the boating lake where I made movies of them in the pedalo boat, then sat on the grass in the open air theatre in the Crafts park listening to the Telugu religious songs on the loudspeakers (very good). Imran never seems to stop speaking and is wonderfully entertaining. We finished a very good trip by walking 2 km back to town for dinner in the Bhimas Paradise veggie restaurant, the four of us being waited on by 8 waiters and a cleaning boy. We then staggered back bloated to the auto stand and so to home where Imran and Gopi produced very good pictures of Hugh, taken for the High Wycombe weekend and transferring him to the New forest. Imran does this all by a random path hit and miss technique which can be slow but which has discovered things I did not know were there. I shall stop this now and have a go myself. Leigh’s CD has just finished so I shall put on something more restful.

Friday 10th January *[I am writing this on Saturday evening while listening to the great Beethoven opus 130 string quartet].*

After my usual broken sleep I was woken by the doorbell and mobile ring at the same time so

amused the otherwise irritable fat lady cook bringing morning tea as I stumbled in my shorts, eyes still closed to the door while muttering into my mobile. Surya had rung to remind me of “your duty to the birds of India sir - they are waiting to have their photos taken; please not to disappoint sir”.

I obeyed but it was cloudy and dull so I merely got a few silhouettes of a hoopoe high in a tree with its crest erect. I am taking huge numbers of pictures and so learning a lot about camera and photoshop. I gave my favourite lectures today - on Mitchell's chemiosmotic hypothesis which can have plenty of stories attached and also experiments to describe which is more enjoyable for me than just plodding through facts. Sudarshan (friend now in final year) called at 11.30 without his friend who was supposed to have come for 'advice about coming to UK'. He could only stay for a few minutes but that was long enough to tell me that it was his birthday and “please sir give me your blessing”; he then knelt down in front of me holding my hands. I just wanted to say get up man and pull yourself together but was saved by the cook calling to ask if I wanted lunch for two. So Sudarshan fled off on his borrowed motorbike. In the afternoon I fought off Srinivasulu's insistent invitations to drive me back to the guest house by pretending that I wanted to wander next door to see the Biochemistry Department staff. He called my bluff by walking with me so I had an hour chatting with Thyagaraju, a short dark 'christian' lecturer who has been head of department for the last three years. Prof Parthasarathy is now head and so can get his own back on his rival Thyagaraju. It's all rather childish. T is good at getting grants but has to share the money with the others who cannot be both to apply - like Southampton before the revolution. T tried to get the other staff to come and join us but they had already gone home - at 3.30. Anyway we had a good gossip for an hour and I set off to walk back, meeting Rajiv Dixit (X is embarrassingly spelt ksh), an old friend - a research student of Parthasarathy - who then invited me to visit on Saturday evening. At about 4.30 I set off on a photographic expedition to the town, cheating at the start by taking an auto down to the cricket ground. - a huge space with some grass but mainly hard red sandy soil playing host to about 15 separate games of cricket. *[the Beethoven has just reached the Cavatina written in thanks for recovery from an illness - it is so beautiful I have tears dropping onto the keyboard; it seems to conjure up the 'presence' of everyone I love and to whom I feel enormous gratitude even if when your hearts on fire smoke does get in your eyes. I seem to have gone native, sorry about that.]*

I tested out the fast repeat frame facility on the camera on a very elegant young batsman and got some very impressive shots. I showed the result to an interested boy who obviously had never seen anything like this before, so stopped the game so that I could show the photos to everyone. Then the inevitable series of photos of cricket team, football team etc with the extra chaos of showing the results, while fending off grabbing hands etc. One boy decided to protect me (my camera) and wielded his bat to maintain order. This set the pattern for another hour's stroll through the streets of Tirupati. Somehow it seems less intrusive to steal a photo from someone if I can then show them the result. A particular success was pictures of scruffy little kids looking after the small open shops. Progress was slow as this often led to friends and parents being summoned to see the result. I tried to use the higher sensitivity range of the camera so that I could take more pictures almost in the dark without flash. This produced pictures but later I found that the quality was not good if they were expanded beyond a small picture.

[I am now listening to - rather battered by - Beethoven's Great Fuge, my number one desert island disk, pure energy, will power, determination, all written by someone who was dying and stone deaf; my irritation with a mosquito a few minutes ago seems rather despicable or at least pathetic].

I had a casual arrangement to call in at Surya's for tea but was met by Sudarshan with his friend

Sukumar on his scooter in the busiest scruffiest part of town by the rail station. Sudarshan is usually very quiet but he jumped off the bike, flung his arms round me (while we were aggressively jostled by a grumpy cow) saying "god has answered my prayer sir - I wanted to see you again today and now here you are and I have drunk 2 litre bottles of Kingfisher beer and you can now give me your blessing here sir in the street with all these witnesses". "Ok no problem but I will whisper" which I did but neither he nor you will know what I said (I didn't hear very clearly either). I then persuaded them with little effort to come and celebrate his birthday with me in Surya's hotel, the Kalyan Residency. We were welcomed by the restaurant staff like old friends (they were surya's friends of course) and we had north Indian thali to save making decisions. Sukumar was very excited that I liked Western classical music as he has many CDs of this and I could tell him how to say the names of the composers. "Do you like John Batch sir?" (Johann Sebastian Bach). Sudarshan then walked me to the bus stand near Surya's and beerily swore undying devotion to his beloved guru before pulling himself together and running for a bus home. I called in at Surya's to have another go at the internet. I first read about Hugh's fish dying. He seems to be coping very well with his bereavement (I had a lovely chat with him later on mobile phone, but missed Libby). There was then a very useful batch of messages - from the editor of my pqq book, from Daisuke about my Japan trip, from Masafumi who was enjoying the snow and was rather bored, and from Leigh, who made up for last year's rather terse cool message with a nice warm chatty message, all of which finished off a very good day. As usual Imran calls regularly during the day "so you won't forget your friend the great Imran, isn't it!"

Saturday 11th January. It's a week now since I left. I am missing you all very much and spend a lot of time thinking about you. I hope this is mutual.

Last night I made the mistake of forgetting my anti mosquito device so was woken at 2 am by buzzing in my ear. It was also rather warm and the light through my curtainless windows were almost enough to read by. I eventually gave in, threw off the bedclothes (1 sheet) and t shirt and lay there so that any mosquitos could have a good feed and go to sleep so that i could do same. Cussedly, they ignored my kind offer and merely buzzed menacingly. A shot of aspirin and a bit of a read did the trick. It is the second Saturday in the month so there is no Saturday lecture. I set off to the nearby village of Thurmagunta to deliver a photo to Venkataraman, the little boy who had proudly shown me his village last year. I had sent a picture to him but not received a reply. On the way there I met him with his father coming to see me at the guest house. Venkataraman has grown in one year from what I had assumed was a ten year old to a much more robust 14 year old 8th Class. [I learned later that my letter had got lost and had finally arrived in December. He had replied to me on 1st January; he had got it typed and so could give me a copy of it]. Of course I was then led by the hand to his village like a sheep to the slaughter (OK, so they are not usually led by the hand). I took 47 photos in the next 90 minutes, inside 5 houses, all providing coffee or tea or horlicks, in the mud streets and on the flat roofs. V kept calling out from the roof to his friends and family who were then photographed from above, each photo being followed by "see photo sir see photo". I met so many brothers, uncles, aunty's cousins, grandfathers, grandmothers, the whole village appeared to be closely related and all were at home and all wanted their photos taken. In these circumstances in the past I used to pretend click the shutter without wasting film, but cannot do that when each picture is critically evaluated by half the village. After promising to return I was finally permitted to leave, like the pied piper with half the village under the age of 90 trailing along behind.

I spent the rest of the morning at the guest house with Surya reading in the sun while he slept and photographing all his dozen certificates so that he could put them on his CV on the internet. This produces copies much better than photocopies and also in colour. I finished the late afternoon with a walk to photograph birds and proved the obvious that

however good the camera light is still needed. I returned to find Rajiv waiting to take me to the other side of town to his house to give advice about writing his PhD thesis. No problem and this was followed by him taking me to the Bliss hotel for dinner followed by a fast cold race through crowded streets back here to have an enjoyable slump in front of this screen with Beethoven, the greatest of them all.

Goodnight dear readers. I miss you, with love, chris.

Sunday 12th January. [I am writing this while listening to Strauss's Rosenkavalier on tuesday evening]

Today was the trip to Chittoor, about 80 Km South west of Tirupati to visit Kiran. Surya had arranged the same ar and drier as we had from chennai, cheaply arranged through the travel dek of his hotel. They arrived at 9.00 exactly as planned. We delayed by a house 'boy' who chose to clean my room which he did really thoroughly including proper disinfectant etc in bath room. I don't think it has ever been cleaner. He is the tall thin boy from last year with St Francis of Assissi eyes. Of course I had 3 phone calls before leaving from Imran to make sure I was operating to (his) plan.. The journey was great, through rural india but on much improved roads, some sun and feeling very well - contrasted with the same journey last year when my eyes had started to giv eme double vision. They have been much better since arriving here. I think it may be the bright light. I called imran as we approachd the outeskirts of chittoor and within a cew minutes he was peering in the window from his borrowed motorbike, wearing his red England shirt. We then followed him through crazily crowded roads and blocked side streets to the hotel (Chandra Residency) which was new, simple, clean and £4 a night. We had lunch at Imran's home. He has moved since last year to a similar house but on a main road and overlooking a small lake (undrainded drainage water). Before lunch we photographed birds on this lake - egrets, paddy birds, kingfisher and drongo flycatchers. I spnt some time g tting a picture of a very impressive bird with big feet and bright red beak (a common moorhen!). Lunch was enormous with Indian roast chicken, rice, naans followed by chocolate cake. After lunch we went to Gopi's house, which is very simple with leaking banana leaf roof. Took the usual tea and biscuits followed by nice photo session with his brothers and parents followed by a trip to the forest where i have been previously.

[i Hhve just fallen asleep and type 14 pages of eeeeeeeee]

Fortunately Imran and gopi are sensible enough to allow to play with the camera. We returned for the expected session in the hotel playiing with photoshop on pictures taken during imran's visit to Tiruapati, the maoin product being an imjpressive picture of a pedalo from tirupati surfing through the waves of Mahabalipuram. Our dinner was in a 'garden restaurant' lit by a few candles. Very nice prawn (pronounced 'prarn' chicken and naan and lentils. I suddenly realised it was Sunday and the family may be recovering from lunch so we stopped at a kiosk and had a very nice chat with everyone. Of course imran hijacked it to talk to my 'very lucky family'. He is really kind, charming, very witty and utterly exhausting. I got him to teach me th eword for shut up (literally shut your mouth). I now have a complete sentence in Telugu "randi, kurchoni,, charlu, muronmoi". This sounds a bit biblical but it means "come here, sit down, enough, shut up".

Imran decided to stay at the hotel, pausing in his incessant chatter to surf through the 30 TV channels while I had a nice read. I kept pressing the bell for service by accident - while adjusting the fan speed. This was instantly answered by a very small 'boy' who had set up his bed, a sheet and pillow on the marble floor of the corridor outside our room. He found this amusing fortunately.

Monday 13th January. The next morning I fought off the proposal to drive 3 hours to some

hills which are famous and beautiful. The thought of 6 hours of this then my 2 hour drive home at the end was not attractive. They were very relieved when I had an alternative plan. We went off to the same temple we had tried to visit last year - about 50 km away, stopping off for wonderful breakfast/lunch of puri massala and mango juice in an open air restaurant off the road. The crows lurk menacingly like the hcocks film waiting for us to finish and hopping on sprung legs across the tables onto ours for left over puris. Fortunately the day was partly cloudy as we had a 5 km walk up the mountain to the temple at the top. The last part was very steep but helped by steps for which we paid a 100 rupee toll (voluntary donation given with gratitude) at the top. The temple was very small and had to be crawled into as it was in the cave in the rock where Krishna had hidden from a storm with his cow. I pleaded an attack of christianity to avoid being saubed with ash and having to eat a revolting looking slop of khaki sacred curry. It was interesting to watch Imran (a muslim) happily taking part with all the hand waving through flames and kissing fingers and all. We continued on the last few hundred feet to the top of the bare mountain which was covered in what I appeared to be the usual direction finding piles of stones. After absent mindedly kicking one over Gopi explained I had damned some poor soul to return as chicken or parrot as this was some religious superstition thing. It was all very arid with just a few thorn bushes and amazingly a small pool in the rocks with beautiful cream lotus flowers which of course Imran and gopi had to pick to present to me (tradition sir). I laid down on a rock and slept for 30 minutes before we galloped down. It was much easier than most of our walks in the french mountains but all the time Imran and Gopi were grabbing me to 'help' me. Children sitting on a tractor near the bottom gave us a lump of sugar cane molasses and ??? which was like a very hard very sweet potato which we had to bite lumps from. It was so sticky that Imran asked a boy in the little village of 5 houses on the way down if he would get some water for us to wash. Again all a bit biblical as the teenage boy came out with a metal urn and poured the water over our hands for us. It is very attractive the way that people interact like this here. As he said, we would happily give a stranger help if asked. I generously rewarded them by taking a couple of photos of the small kids with an old man who wandered into the photoshoot. The real 'reward' is showing them the results afterwards which bought out another half dozen kids to join in. Although I carried my camera expectantly (we had seen so many interesting birds last year when we only visited the lower slopes) but I saw very little and photographed none. We stopped for lunch/tea at the same restaurant on the way home, dropped off Gopi and called in to say goodbye to Imran's father who is good company with his stories of his time as a police inspector. They are all off for a 12 hour journey to return Imran's sister and her new baby to their home in Gurnool further north in the State. I was eventually permitted to leave for my 90 minute drive home. I quite enjoyed the trip home without Imran's chatter but it was partly spoilt by the tape played by the driver of Telugu film music with its very high pitched nasal girls singing with even higher unison fiddles screeching and swooping around. We got back at sevenish so I went down to the Town Club region to check email. While there I tried to find the home of Seshi Kumar a student I met last year when he was helping in his uncles shop - selling a shirt to Madhu at the time. The address is 1-06-603 Indira nagar. Indira nagar is the area by the town club made up of little back streets (alleys really) full of small businesses and homes where the cooking seems to be on outdoor stoves. There was no logic to the system but it was fun asking people for help. Eventually two students offered to find the address while I went to the internet to wade through a lot of email - including a couple of reports I needed to write to support grant applications. The students came in to say they had found the place but had seen seshi going out to get stuff for his father and that he would call next day to see me. When I gave them my visiting card in response to their request for my ID please sir, they were very excited to find they had been helping a professor: " this is our reward from our god sir who we have been serving by helping

strangers”!!

After returning to finish the email (an hours work for 10 rupees) I came home by auto to collapse into bed (actually ‘onto’ my hard wood board covered with one inche of soft mattress). I phoned Leigh and was amazed (and delighted) that he was there so I heard about his impressive bell ringing in St Martins in the Fields off Trafalgar Square and was comforted that his writing has gone well.

Tuesday 14th January. *I have just opened this (Thursday night) to find a message that the programme had stopped wrongly and so I had a back up to open. Wordperfect then claimed it could not recognize its own backup files. So I seem to have lost a few pages - . It is very tempting to give up. I shall try to give a summary of what I vaguely remember while listening to my French Celine Dion.*

Raja should have come at 10.30 but fortunately he did not as Prof arrive to check that I survived without him for the weekend and we had a nice long chat about India/Pakistan/Kashmior/ th ecorruption of the foreign misister George Fernandes etc. I mentioned that I could do with a small table and chair for using at my other tabl. He immediately leaped into action (actually heaved himself up like a basking walrus and hauled someone out of the guest house office to open up the adjacent room to mine. We stole their table and chair and then swapped my worst armchair, making him feel very pleased with himself. I am of course very pleased as the small chair I have acquired is better for carrying out into the sun. Raja turned up soon after he had left. He had been up since 5 in the morning doing his duty for the Bogi (pronounced bogey as in bogey man) which is where old things are taken out before dawn and burned in the street; he could not explain why, or what was achieved. Enjoyed catching up with his news - he is selling HPLC equipment to biochemists and biotechnologists in Hyderabad. We met up again with surya in the evening to eat in our usual little garden restaurant.

Wednesday 15th January. The day started very well with a walk in nearby University area - rough thorn bushes, Acacias and Eucalyptus where I even saw two new birds () which has become rarer each year as the town is moving into the countryside and I have seen most of the more common ones. I managed at last to get a few good bird photos. A couple of boys came and disturbed me as I was about to get a good picture of a Coucal (half pheasant half crow). One gave me his name and shook hands, the other following his lead so I took his hand which turned out to be a leprosy stump - I hope my wince was not perceptible. As I walked into the guest house grounds Murali came up on his motorbike (he workded her etwo years ago as a general dogsbody and took me over, providing tea and anything he could think of that I might like (usually rather horrible plastic bags of curry from a local shack. He now has a permanent job as a gardener in the University grounds. So had the usual computer photo show of family friends etc. Sheshi was supposed to be coming to see me at 10.30 but fortunately did not appear so I had a good long sit in the weak sun in the garden, sorting out photos etc until hands appeared over my eyes to announce that Madhu (Imran’s friend from last year) had at last found me. It turned out that the rather aggressive emails he had sent to me demanding that I help his brother get a job in UK were in fact written by his brother. He was very angry when I asked him about ‘his nasty emails’. Anyway he is now away studying engineering and cokking for himself so he looks even more slender. He has a very nice sense of humour and had some good comments to make about my photos. Of course then we had to have photos of us, learning at last how to take flash pictures on the delayed timer. [*Surya bought his speakers to attach to the computer earlier so I am sitting surrounded by Celines voice belting out my favourite French song - Papillon*]. Madhu reminded me that he had come all the way from Chitoor to see me on a dusty hot road so I offered a drink of water: “Chris you are very English, I need a hot shower and chocolate”. I would have thought that

that was the English thing to have but he successfully took my last bar of Nestles dark chocolate and had a hot 'bucket shower', leaving the bathroom 2 inches deep in water. I left him listening to Leigh's CD while i snatched a quick lunch of cold deflated greasy puris and chick peas. Madhu's friend collected him and drove off on motorbike after promising to be here when he calls in early Saturday morning with his 'girlfriend' also from chittoor and doing the same course as him. I had hardly time to tidy up my stuff (visitors always explore all my belongings) when Sudarshan (last year's student) arrived with his friend Sukumar to listen to some of my Bach but I then found that the ludpeakers in my laptop are really too weak to listen to (earphones ok and Surya has now fitted external speakers). After about 20 minutes, Sheshi arrived in orange shirt, dark glasses, tight black jeans and huge boots like Clive's. He looks great but it can't be comfortable at 30 degrees. He had not come in the morning as arranged as he had to go up to the temple in the hills with his family. In broken English (smashed rather than broken) he told me his plans for the future. This includes going to the capital Hyderabad to become a motorcycloe champion or a champion boxer or perhaps a model. I hope reality does not catch up too soon to spoil his enthusiasm. As usual we had to go through my photos which included the earlier ones of Murali who turns out to be his good friend (this perhaps explains why he was dressed almost identically now I come ot think of it). He is rather vain (with some reason) so wanted lots of photos. He especially wanted one on his motorbike which he then wants to graft onto a photo of a racing bike using photoshop or something like it. I have found that a 'bike' is always a motorbike; if pedalled it is a bicycle. My visitors always want to make plans for a next visit but rarely keep any arrangements but he got me to promise I would be here to see him some time soon but I cannot remember when, perhaps tomorrow. Had dinner with Surya and Sudarshan, after meeting them at the entrance to the train station, in the Bhimas de Luxe hotel, the only hotel available in 1982. Its underground dark restaurant is probably the best in Tirupati. I was given the responsibilty of ordering which kept them amused for some time. The best things were the special rice dish covered in a thin layer of spicy spinach covered in silver foil, the fresh lime soda and butterscotch icecream. There seems little chance that I will come back any lighter this year. My gaunt servant of the Raj look has not even started yet.

Thursday 16th January. I needed two blankets last night and a towel but the day soon was hot sun plus cooler breeze and welcome clouds. I went for the first time for a morning walk to the Dairy farm. Disappointingly they have now put high walls all around their fields so I cannot use it as a route out to the villages. The farm itself is wonderfully clean. It is owned and run by the Tirupati Tirumula Devasthanams (TTD, the administrative body that looks after everything belonging to Sri Venkateswara, the god in the hills - which means most things in Tirupati. Its main function is to provide food and milk for the pilgrims up in the hills. At last I got some good pictures of bea eaters and a roller. I am gradually sorting out how to use the camera to best effect. I had a nice chat with one of the senior administrators who said that he had seen me every January for the last few years and had assumed that I was a naturalist collecting annual data for a bird survey. He assured me that I am welcome any time to go anywhere in the farm and reminded me that I should visit the temple elephants when they come home for lunch. The security guard at the entrance was presumably an old soldier as he stood to attention and saluted as I came past. I assumed he was teasing but he looked too serious for that so I returned his salute which earned a "thank you SIR". As I approached the guest house on the main road a man from the Department came cycling up waving a letter - your nice letter Libby so I had a nice read in the garden with a cup of spicy sweet milky tea (complete tea), bought out by lady cook. Breakfast this morning was a change from omellette - Two cold hard-boiled eggs which were remarkably welcome after giving them plenty of salt

and coarse black pepper. I spent almost the whole day uninterrupted sorting out some camera problems by doing lots of experiments on focus, depth of field, speed of reaction etc. I think I have solved a few more problems. One interruption was by a small boy (turned out to be 18 but was less than 5 feet tall) who came over and asked for a drink of water. He had been jumping up to pull off leaves of the mango tree. He explained that on religious holidays (they are all genuine Holy days here) these leaves are used as decorations across the doorways - explaining why so many houses have old brown dried leaves tied to the door frames. He is planning to join the army in 5 years time, so that he can shoot some Pakistanis, he explained. At about 4 o'clock I set out to the town to test some of my ideas for the camera. For the first time I walked all the way in, in the golden setting sun. I had intended to spend some time in the cricket ground and was disappointed to get a mobile call from Sudarshan to make arrangements for tomorrow's visit to his house. When I told him where I was headed he asked to come and meet me there. I wanted to wander around alone but couldn't think how to explain without offending him so arranged to meet in the cricket ground in 15 minutes. This was a mistake as the ground was locked closed. It was still full of people because the bars in the gate had been sawn through and bent but the hole was too small for me to get through without an inhibitory loss of dignity. So I waited outside, acting as a welcomer to the boys who I had met there previously, as they came up to climb over the 3 metre gate or get through the hole. Sudarshan and Sukumar arrived after 40 minutes, during which I took a few photos. At one point a woman, in an impressive dark green silk sari came noisily down towards me wielding a cane as if it were a conductor's baton or a marital arts weapon, talking loudly to herself. When she passed me she paused a second, shouted something, presumably obscene from the laughs of the people nearby and then spat a great red gob of spit at my feet then stood silently staring. Never at a loss our brave Christian gentleman put his hands up in a very formal Namaste which won applause from the audience as she flounced off waving her stick and shouting. When Sudarshan arrived I was expected to decide what we would do when all I wanted to do was mooch about near the temple. So we did that eventually before he remembered he had to go somewhere else, leaving me to mooch moodily alone (thankfully) into the inner temple, leaving my sandals in the special free sandal place. No cameras allowed inside. They have a new development this year to help keep the place clean. At the foot of many of the impressive carved granite columns they have placed waste bins in the shape of gormless plastic white rabbits, making the whole place even more like Alice in Wonderland. I liked the notice that offered 'Special quicky darshan of Lord, 20 rupees'. Darshan is the business of going up to the god and communing with him with offers of coconut and marigolds and camphor flames. This offer means you bypass the long queues of pilgrims lining the walls in wire fenced walkways. While waiting the hour or so before being due at Surya's for tea I called into the new Sidhuri Park hotel restaurant, found the only table with enough light to read by and ordered a fresh lime and soda and filtered coffee. Another waiter had to be called to determine in which sequence I wanted them. So I had to enact it with slate and pepper pots "lime here, and coffee here NOW". I then saw them re-enact this for the education of 2 other waiters on the other side of the restaurant. Both good and so was the read - VS Naipaul's latest novel. Tea at Suryas, followed by usual enjoyable auto ride home, installation of the speakers and now to bed. I have just had a message to visit me so I must get my zipper set up.

Good night my dears, missing you all very much.

Friday 17th January. *[I am writing this on the following Saturday afternoon at 4 o'clock (sounds Irish) after a hot afternoon in the sun preparing next week's lectures].* I started the day with a vague feeling that I had something planned but couldn't find any note of it. So fortunately I left a note to say I would be back at 10 and went out at 8.30 on my usual

for perfect Indian bird pictures. No success at all but did get a remarkable picture of what is probably a mongoose, one of a pair (of mongeese?) that lolloped by with their long coats almost touching the ground. I found a very nice peaceful area behind the the vet college library (an empty apparently unused building standing on its own amongst the usual forest of thorn and acacia trees) and was about to take the ultimate picture of a small sunbird - like a humming bird, when my phone shattered the peace. It was Madhu calling to remind me that 'we had a date sir at 9.00 at the guest house - I have brought my girlfriend to meet you from Chittoor'. End of peace, 15 minute brisk walk back to find delighted Madhu with suitcases and pretty girl. I ma not sure what the definition of his 'girlfriend' is but she is doing the same course at a college away from Chittoor and they had both come to Tirupati to see relatives. After the usual photos and chat he ostentatiously wrote in "our next date" in my notebook (next Saturday). I have now written out a diary for the next 3 weeks and screwed it to the wall to avoid more important errors. I had been rather sorry to have to agree to go early to Sudarshan's home today as I wanted a little more time alone but he would have made such a sad thing of it that I had agreed. His friend Sukumar collected me on his scooter at 11.10, complaining that I must have forgotten that he was coming (I was sitting reading in the garden) at 11.00. I told him as he was 10 minutes late I caould also be 10 minutes late so he would have to wait. HE then tried ot make up for lost time by driving at the limits of his scooter through the centre of tirupati and out the other side to the small town of Trichanoor. The rule seems to be that if there is a hazard ahead (usually a mix of autos, buses, bullocks bikes and people), on no account must you slow down; you charge at the melee as if diving into a rugger scrum with your horn blazing, hoping someone else will lose their nerve first. Any braking must be done as violently as possible and only if all else fails. Sudarshan's family are strict Brahmins and they moved out of Tiruapti to avoid the noise and contact with 'other people'. They have a new small house in its own little plot with banana and papaya trees. It is very peaceful but as there are many other haouses being built all around this might not last long. I don't know why they had insisted on me being there early as all we did was sit and watch Englan play Sri Lanka at cricket (in New Zealand or Australia) for about an hour when lunch was served by sudarshan. This was for Sukumar and me only as Sudarshan had only recently had breakfast, father was at work and mother and daughter fo course do no teat with the men (they went to the temple instead). The steel pots containing our lunch items (as they were referred to) were laid out on the floor fur us to sit and eat in the brahmin way but I pleaded christianityy again and was allowed ot sit on a chair and eat with a spoon. We then had good wander into town (ten minutes walk) with me doing my film director stuff. I have given up pretending not to be a tourist, and stomp about with camera dangling. It was an almost cloudless afternoon and the white temple gopurams with their golden balls in a row along the top provided a sort of centre of colourful chaos with all the usual food stalls selling bananas and coconuts to offer to the gods, garish religious stalls with gods images mixed with the occasional Catholic Mary ("look sir, Jesus's mum" - do you want sir?). I stood for a time uncertain how to take a picture of some very colourful ladies sitting in the road selling garlands of flowers, when one of them saw me and solved the problem of calling me over to take a photo, the photo opportunity being hijacked by some auto driveers (probably husbands). After a cup of tea at Sudarshan's we waited to leave but were prevented by the arrival of his father who is a caricature of ghandi, thin bald, floppy spectacles, white 'thing' draped around and a mmuddle of a Namaste and double handed handshake synchronised with a giggling head wobble. Fortunately I was allowed to return by bus and auto to guest house - with Sudarshan- where we were due to be met by surya to go out, at 5'Clock. Whiel waiting I set out to sort out some photos on the computer which was useful as Surya had overslept (he is working nbights) and turned up at six with the slowest auto ever for a very (too) gentle ride for 30 minutes to Chandragiri, a 16th century palace and fort that was founded 1500 years

before, to see the Sound and light show. It was fortunate that we set out late as the English performance was not until 7.30 so we only had one hour to wait. It was very good, only about 40 minutes, and proved a good test for the camera set on ISO=400 (4 times as sensitive as usual), providing some rather garish red architecture.

Surya did a typical Surya thing afterwards and while agreeing that it would be nice to call in at the Adhithi restaurant with Sudarshan for dinner (a quiet inexpensive veggie restaurant opposite the internet place, which I later wanted to visit), he stopped the auto at a sort of truckers stop. This was a half open air café full of drivers and Arryappa pilgrims (all in black with wild eyes and uncut hair and beards). All incredibly noisy so my sulk probably went undetected. As usual his was a good idea, the food being very good and extraordinarily cheap. We had dosas and ~??? (thick pancakes packed with onions and bits of chillie and other vegetable matter), served on banana leaves and eaten with hands. I can manage this all quite well except for eating rice with remains to me a disgusting messy way of eating with a mixture of rice, curds and greasy curry creeping up between the fingers and reaching the wrists in the less socially graceful. So as usual Surya was right, except in his never telling me his plans. As I clambered down from the auto at the guest house I had a frantic call on the mobile from Imran in Chittoor who had cut himself on the small knife I gave him (the sort that goes in a credit card-sized device). He went to the hospital but did not need stitches. “Do not worry my dear Chris, we are ow truly blood brothers isn’t it”. I pointed out that I had no intention of spilling my blood to make it all mutual. “That is good, it means you alone can remain perfect”.

[Mosquitoes are starting so off to the cricket ground and internet]

[Continuing writing, listeneing to Haydn String quartet, at seven on Sunday morning having been woken by my tea hammering on the door; the violence of this always sends my adrenaline too high to get back to sleep]

Saturday

I woke with the relaxed recollection that I had no plans for today, except for a possible visit from Seshi Kumar at 4 in the afternoon. After boring egg breakfast I set off to explore the one part I have ignored so far, the area near the newly-built women’s college. This is pronounced ‘Callage’, conjuring a sort of page 3 collage of women’s bits. This is the place tthat last year caused me a problem when I found a way into the large wild area where I had previously seen hoopoes and other exotic birds but had been unable to find a way out. In the past year they have built a high wall all around it and the other college buildings so I had a long walk down half way to town on a small road parallel with the railway track, getting a fairly good picture of a Coppersmith bird, a small sort of woodpecker that has such a monotonous clonking call that continues all afternoon that is is said to have driven the memsahibs of the Raj crazy in the summer heat. It looks harmless enough. On the way around I met 3 different groups of children from the thumalagunta village who stopped to chat. Eventually I got around the walled area (so missing the best birdy bit) and found myself in the fields out beyond Thumulagunta where I used to walk previously. As I walked on the red dirt road past another small village I was stopped for ‘photo’ by (for a change) and old lady and her friends so did the usual thing. The scrabble afterwards to show the picture of themselves was like being in a sort of witches dances with the old hags clawing me and the camera. When I looked at the pictures later this was clearly all in the mind as they were just a load of nice old ladies. One of them grabbed my wrist and I was dragged into the village like a naughty boy, the destination being their small village temple where I photographed their gods, painted and dress up like a load of dolls. I escaped eventually after making a video clip of them aggregating for a group photo which they got very excited about. I explained with a lot of hand waving to tthe slightly demented old man who was trying to drag me into his hut that I had to go and see a man about some cytochromes and cabbages and he let me go,

nodding his understanding of my predicament. As it was about 10.30 by then it was getting very hot so I found a way home by way of the back of thumalagunta, stopping to get a really good picture of a kite and some pictures of a couple of boys playing cricket to test the 'repeat shot facility' of the camera. As I was doing this Raja phoned from Hyderabad to say that he had been unexpectedly called back but would try to get here again before I left. He warned me that a friend of his was coming to the UK and wanted to see me before he left. Ten minutes later the friend phoned to ask if I could come and we agreed that he would come in twenty minutes. A rare auto then magically appeared and took me back to the guest house for 10 rupees and a wash. Of course the friend did not appear for another 45 minutes during which the lecturer Sai gopal called to check if I was OK, conveniently driving off to get some more mineral water for me. The friend of Raja then turned up so I made him wait 20 minutes before dismissing Sai gopal. The friend was a bit boring and of course wanted to know if I could help get a job after his one year course in business management in Middlesex University in Hendon, West London (I hadn't heard of it). I cannot imagine they will teach him anything of use here but I could be wrong (I have been told before).

I had a very good veggie lunch with Chapatis, potatoes and dahl then spent most of the afternoon reading and doing lecture preparation, sitting outside in the sun. I had a vague idea that Sheshi Kumar might come so had an excuse to just sit around in the sun. I had another go at calling Libbie in case she had not set out on her weekend camping with Philippa and Maxine but there was no reply. I had tried many times unsuccessfully on Friday to do this but had been disappointed. I had a very nice consolation prize when I got a sleepy Hugh but his phone went dead soon as his battery expired.

At five O'Clock, as Seshi was probably not going to arrive, I set off, camera bag and all in the golden setting sun, luck finding me an auto immediately. The driver was less auspicious, with a mean hunted look and he could not understand my perfectly pronounced "Balaji colony please" until I omitted the "please", like my mother in reverse who could not understand requests unless I added this useless word on the end. His evil eyes lit up when I accepted his proposed 20 rupees (should be 15 but I wanted to get going). When we arrived at the cricket ground I found I only had 100 rupee notes, so he indicated that I should go get change. I thought that I had won when he agreed to clamber down and get some from a street vendor, but he won by giving me only 65 rupees change as no-one had any more change in Tirupati so I cursed him with a very useful phrase "may your dinners be limited to methanol dehydrogenase only". I had found that when accosted by villagers gabbling in rapid Telugu, my questions and waving arms, any answer is more polite than none and I can get away honourably by saying anything with a nod and smile at the end. They then allow me on my way, honour and hospitality satisfied. This evolved from encounters with well meaning academics introduced to me in the virology department who wanted to know my own subject of interest. After my response "the interaction of electron transport proteins, especially methanol dehydrogenase, a quinoprotein, and cytochrome c", their eyes glaze over and a fixed smile and sideways nodding of the head tells me it is time to stop. Of course I get the same reaction in Southampton - all over the world in fact. I wonder why. This reminds me of a similar thing when Lazare, a French violinist in the orchestra and an expert on some aspect of computing involving digital recording, came to coffee after orchestra. I suggested to him that he explain to Hugh what his work involved and he was daft enough to tell him for at least 20 minutes without a break, during which Hugh absent mindedly wandered off upstairs. This has a little relevance as Lazare is learning Carnatic violin in Chennai at the moment and he emailed me yesterday to try to arrange to visit here. I very much hope he comes.

Where was I? The cricket ground. Even the spreading evil of plastic bags strewn over the ground all around my walking area could not irritate and diminish the euphoria caused by this peaceful place, although full of activity, in the golden setting sun with the crows lazily

converging on their roosting places, one of which is the new mobile phone transmitter tower. I thought that I had successfully escaped excessive attention as I approached the exit gate, when a rather aggressive-looking youth cycled up and asked me to walk back some way and photograph the all India cricket team, indicating a grinning waving mob so I did my duty. The most entertaining part of this is the fighting for the best positions, the confusion being increased this time by one boy who felt his bicycle should have a place in the picture, waving it over his head. I had the idea of capturing that part on video which gives a better indication of why I produce so many of this sort of photo. Showing the pictures afterwards to them seemed to make me part of the team and I was escorted out of the ground in triumph, still leaving enough time to sort out emails. After slowly removing 3 days of spam I was left with only seven emails to read, all a bit slow this evening. The internet speed is inversely proportional to the number of sandals left outside at the entrance. Had a very nice email from Murali who had a stomach bug and was quarantined out of the children's wards. He gave a nice description of why he liked coming home to Southampton - Hugh's nice company, Hugh's log fires, Libby's lovely food and a constant supply of interesting visitors; I presume it is my absence in India that precludes me from any mention. I had a couple of reminders of real life in the form of email requests for help with exam matters which I guiltily referred to Robert or Niall. It was almost dark when I set out finally to walk to Surya's for dinner through a busier town than normal. It is approaching the end of the Ayappa season - when his devotees go on tours of his temples with no hair cutting, wearing only black lungis with faces often decorated with coloured stripes and ash. Near the railway crossing, and the free choudharies where they sleep, the place was overrun with them in the streets, lit only by the carts selling snacks and the small shack shops by the road. The only way to detect their ghostly presence in the dark was to walk along shouting jokes so that their smiles would indicate their location. We watched a Harrison Ford film, Airforce I on a pirated tape, which saved me the struggle of trying to have a conversation with Swarna's husband who is visiting for a few days. I was comforted that the family also find his accent very difficult. Surya later escorted me through the coachloads of Ayappa devotees back to the auto stand for the usual enjoyable splutter home along Netaji road where he used to live and back to the guest house.

Sunday 19th January. As usual my day was started by door banging and tea, and diary writing. I felt the room needed a bit of slum clearance and was then interrupted by the cook laughing at me sweeping the room with my reed broom, bending over with my head in the small of my back swishing the dust out the door onto my veranda. She unsuccessfully tried to take the broom and offered breakfast instead. I had a vague idea that Surya might turn up on his way home from night duty with the Sunday paper, so I rejected the breakfast offer and nodded agreement when she mimed the suggestion that I am tired of omelette. At 8.30 Surya did arrive and when he went to order tea for us was told that the cook thought I did not like Indian breakfast. I hope this will lead to a general change. The immediate result was that she prepared very good dosas (rice pancakes) with samba and chillie chutney. We then had a gentle relaxed Sunday morning read of the Hindu before Surya went off home to bed. Imran called during breakfast and was very alarmed when I got Surya to reply and to tell him that I had given him my phone. Imran was so relieved when it was passed to me "I thought you had given phone to surya so you did not have to talk to Imran all the time"; "No Imran, I have the phone only so that I can talk to you". "No Chris, you are only saying that to please me". "Of course Imran, you are right, I want to please only you"; "no sir you cannot win like that, you must be sincere at all times isn't it?" "Please I will come for two days next week to visit you"; "that's wonderful, I am so please". "No chris,

that was only a test, I thought you would say you are too busy"; "I am never too busy for you Imran". "You are only saying that to please me my dear Chris isn't it?". Etc. Etc. I later had a nice long chat with Lazare and have arranged that he will visit next weekend, when we will probably go to the see the Sri Venkateswara temple at Tirumula in the hills.

I am now writing this on Wednesday morning and cannot remember what I've done the last few days. Probably nothing worth mentioning.

In the afternoon it was very hot and sunny so I walked down to the auto stand and hired one to take me to Kapilatheertham, the temple at the bottom of the hills with a large tank (pool) into which a very high waterfall crashes. No rain this season so no waterfall. It used to be a very simple calm place but it has now been tarted up with models of painted gods in little fenced gardens, piped music and pepsi stands. It is all a bit theme parkish. *[my writing of this is being interrupted by the man next door clearing his throat as if he was choking - the usual early morning ritual which i find disgusting and which makes me want to retch. This is the man who sat opposite me at lunch yesterday putting me off dinner by his eating. It is possible to eat discreetly with hands but I timed him to ten seconds per mouthful of swilling his rice and runny curry around his plate, lifting up handfuls and spattering them back again until satisfied with the composition he flung it more or less accurately into his mouth].*

There were very few people at the temple so I was able to wander into the inner courtyard where there was a more sort of domestic set of gods, covered in brilliant red and yellow paste, under a huge tree where i sat and read for half an hour, taking occasional surreptitious photos. I then set out to nearby Giripuram by auto to see Kiran. I had expected him to come to see me at the guest house after I met his sister on the Tirachanoor road (boating place) but no sign of him. Perhaps he is feeling guilty for all his requests for money last year. I thought that I recognised his Tamarind tree at the end of his street so I paid the driver, then found I was wrong. I wandered vaguely downhill hoping to find a landmark but failed and eventually caught another auto for the 2km into town near the cricket ground where I had gently wander before going home.

Monday Imaran came from Chittoor and spent a lot of time with the computer producing crazy pictures in photoshop. His random approach has provided me with a lot of useful tips. Before leaving we went to the new Adhiti restaurant next to the Balaji Colony and had excellent prawn curry. Although he said he must rush back he got hooked on photoshop again which was a bit dull for me. Little Praveen turned up to say hello and I suggested he came back in 30 minutes which he promised to do. At last Imran left (at 8.00). As Praveen was coming I could not do as I had intended which was to go to the internet pub. But he didn't come and I had a rather grey evening, feeling uninclined to do anything much so I put on some Bach violin music and thought of home.

Tuesday. The very low cloud over my red hills started a scorching day which I started with a bird walk near the Vet college. At last I have seen a Golden Oriole but, although a brilliant colour they disappear into the high foliage very quickly so i failed to get a picture. The early morning sun was a wonderful start to the day and I nearly forgot to get back for my scooter lift to lecture as I chased around getting some pictures of a Magpie robin which is a sort of cross between (guess). I met subhash on the walk back and arranged to go out in the evening with him and his friend (Satheesh) in the evening. Had an almost eventless day, sitting in the sun, doing my washing, sorting my bird photos and preparing lectures.

After the afternoon lecture Parthasarathy came over from Biochemistry to ask me to go there and give a guest lecture. His suggested time was Saturday when I knew that no-one would

want to go (and maybe Lazare would be here). So I tried to resist. He is 'out of station' next week and was very insistent that I should do it, reminding me that they can pay an honorarium (300 rupees). So I gave in and will give a research talk tomorrow in the afternoon. I had a dreadful ride back on his scooter. He changes gear every five seconds 2/3/2/3/2/3rd. At the main road he crossed the first lane of the dual carriageway safely but did not even glance down the road as we crossed into our side, causing a fast little Maruti car to swerve over into the inside lane where it hit the kerb (gently), causing its six passengers to hang out the windows cursing (not gently). Parthasarathy did not even notice.

Sudarshan came at about 4.30 to discuss the possibility of coming to UK to do a PhD. Apparently he has a rich uncle who wants to pay. So I talked myself hoarse in response to all his questions. As he left, Praveen arrived apologising for yesterday. His English is limited so I entertained him with photos on computer (family, holidays etc). Satheesh then came as arranged but Subash failed to appear so we drove off (dangerously) on his new Hero Honda motorbike to the autostand near the university entrance to collect the others to go on down to the Adithi restaurant again. The others were the three girls who, with Satheesh have been employed in their first year after MSc to be teaching fellows in Microbiology. So I have known them for the last 2 years. I was welcomed into gloom of the restaurant as a regular customer and we were given complimentary lime juices in old fashioned flat champagne glasses. We started by me sorting out the girls names, Padma, Jyothi and Indu, who I remembered for some reason had a brother in Maidenhead which pleased her (my memory not the brother). As I have found before, the girls are better company than the boys, but of course have to be seen in groups. Surya, who should have come for dinner arrived just as we were having ice cream so he came up and had a Kulfi before taking photos. I would find this embarrassing at home but it provides such entertainment here (especially viewing the result) that I can cope. Surya and I made some excuse so that I would not have to travel on the Honda and then for old times sake walked all the way back to the guest house up the long road which we used to have to do in the dark by torch light. It is now a well-lit dual carriageway road but nicely lined with acacia trees.

Wednesday. I was woken by next door man doing his disgusting throat thing at about 6.30 and my dozing was cancelled by Imran phoning. He had had a bad dream where people broke into my room to steal the computer and woke up 'worried for your safety'. I found that I could lie on my side and balance the phone on my ear and half sleep while he chattered on. He was on his roof looking at the birds in the dirty drainage lake by his house, while marvelling at the 'fog coming out my mouth; do you have this thing in England Chris?'

I had inflated puri bahjis for breakfast with my usual two small cups of tea. Feeling too lazy to walk in the already hot day, I gave myself a moral boost by carefully preparing the first of my photosynthesis lectures and then my Thursday formal lecture in Biochemistry Department. As I sat on my veranda feeling virtuous the tall thin cleaner boy Dilliraju appeared with his little broom to clean the room. He always avoids eye contact as he comes up then looks down as he asks "room clean sir", my enthusiastic smiling yes then produces a very happy smile and thank you sir. He does an excellent job which I show I have at last got his name; I asked him to write it in my little book so I can give him a present (rupees) designated for him at the end. I have never discovered if the general tip I leave ever gets distributed. Yesterday when the usually grumpy old lady cook brought us tea I got Sudarshan to thank her properly and to tell her that she looks after me like my mother, leading to lots of grinning and head wagging. This was then translated to me as "He looks after me as if I am his mother", referring apparently to the fact that I try to remember to collect the tea in the kitchen to save her clambering over the barrier the idiots have built between the kitchen and dining room., and to the rupees I give her at the end of my visit. My

lecture was OK but the lecture theatre was very hot. It is almost open air with huge glassless windows and looking out over the red hills and the doors open onto the open balcony overlooking the campus and the inert biochemistry department. After my lecture I walk into Profs open office, always containing a few minions waiting to do his bidding, stride to the sink and stand while one of them turns on the tap for me or pours water from a plastic jug over my chalk-caked hands, while another stands by with a towel and a third pours my cup of tea. I could get used to this life. I had told Sai Gopal and Srinivasulu (staff) about the dangerous driving of Parthasarathy yesterday, driving out onto the main road without looking and this has had a good effect. Both of them that day drove much more carefully and Srinivasulu even gave me a little lecture on how these fellows never stop at the main road (this was the first time he ever did).

[I am writing this at 7.30 Thursday morning while listening to the waltz scene from Strauss's Der Rosenkavalier, an exuberant start to the day].

I handed over my washed shirts before lunch to another of Srinivasulu's minions to take to the 'ironing shop' which is a man with a cart with a little charcoal fire and an iron full of glowing charcoal. They later came back beautifully folded with sheets of torn up Hindu newspaper between the layers.

This was the hottest day so far with few clouds and less breeze than usual, so I sat in the sun for half an hour before lunch thinking of home and what a long time it is until we can sit in the garden in the sun (even with a fleece on). After the afternoon lecture it was too hot to seriously think of a walk, especially as the birds all hide from me in that heat so I slept for half an hour then walked into town. My aim was to take some videos of typical Tirupati traffic. The road is very well shaded now with the huge acacias and there is little traffic at that time but the usual things all happened including a dramatic race between two tractors towing carts. This appears much more lame without the sound effects. Half way down at a crossroads the exit of one of the girls colleges was pouring them out in a great blue stream in their uniform saris, watched by four teenage boys parked down the road for that purpose I guess from their giggled request that I photograph the girls.

[The Strauss has just passed the great climax where the three women pour out all their mixed joy and sadness of their loves, giving me such a prolonged tingle that I feared for my physiological safety, and found tears dripping onto the keyboard. This must be my usual half-time feelings of separation from family and friends at home].

Of course the boys then went through the familiar interrogation, all clammering for my attention, more confused than usual by the arm grabbing and competition being cluttered up by the three bikes they were on. Of course the picture session followed and I later took video bits when they decided they had not had enough and cycled back to see me again. The result thrilled them so much we had to exchange names and addresses and promises to meet next week sometime (I have pockets full of such unfulfilled promise notes). I did my standard recuperation wander around the cricket ground which was fairly empty and then down to Gandhi road for more photos and back to the internet place. After removing my 25 SPAM messages I was disappointed to find that there was almost nothing new left, the exception being an urgent reminder for me to reply to the Fax sent by the husband of Gloria Rani (the lady who visited us this year) demanding bank details to go with my sponsorship letter for some friend to come to UK. It was quite a relief to be able to refuse. I also took the opportunity, meanly, to point out that the person I had previously sponsored (their son or nephew) had never visited, phoned or written thanks. I just had a few minutes left amongst the crashes to fire off a few quick hellos to home before getting an auto to the rail crossing near Suryas so that I could go and get him to do our evening duty. On the way I tried to video (in the near darkness) some of the chaos in the Gandhi road and near the station but the result gives only a tiny part of the overall experience, lacking the noise, smells, dust and heat.

During my walk earlier, Lazare had phoned to tell me his train arrives from Chennai tomorrow morning at 9.30. I now have to face Srinivasulu to tell him I am cancelling 3 lectures (Friday and Saturday). Our duty this evening was to walk in the dark and dust to the Bliss hotel for a ceremony to celebrate the weaning of a baby onto solid food, the parent being the sister of surya's friend Ram whose wedding celebration I had attended five years ago. We sat in the hall facing the stage where a half naked priest sat reciting the Vedas and family and friends stuffed the crying child with bits of food while the starving audience could smell the delicious food waiting behind us, each big silver salver accompanied by a uniformed hotel boy. After an hour of this we had some traditional dancing and music, during the later part of which we queued for food. Surya had kindly told me of my important engagement at 9.00 (he had not told me of this) so I was surprised by the parents and their parents coming to thank me especially for sparing the time from my busy schedule and "please jump on the queue for your dinner". This I did, then stood in a great crush of hot bodies all eating their curry with their fingers, splashing it about in a rather revolting way. There seems to be a class thing (not caste, but education I guess) rather like our table manners. The better dressed guests seemed to manage with least fuss, tucking little balls of rice and curry neatly between the tips of fingers and transferring discreetly to mouth. Others, mixed and stirred the slurry for at least ten seconds per mouthful, handfulls and dropping back on the plate until satisfied with the consistency and then a quick throw into an already splattered mouth (aren't i a snob). So we escaped quickly for an auto back to listen to Beethoven string quartet, interrupted of course by scatty phone call from Imran, who is coming sometime today with Gopi. *Breakfast calls.*

Thursday 23th January. As mentioned above, the day started with writing diary to the music of Rosenkavalier. I woke feeling rather dull and lifeless but soon felt guilty and as always at the start of the second half of my visits I feel that time here is rather precious so set off in the hot morning sun with camera and binoculars to the pig research association. All these buildings belonging to the veterinary college are set in extensive joining grounds that are like wild countryside or parks gone to seed. This part had always produced nice lots of birds. It did so today and I even got a picture of the first exciting bird I saw in tirupati - a Tree-pie, like a very quiet magpie with beautiful tan brown top. The picture can be used for identification but was too distant to be a good picture. I then had a good chance of catching a giant coucal but as I slowly inched round the corner of a deserted pig house I bumped (literally) into Subash on his way to work on a cycle. I lost the coucal but gained an extraordinarily uncomfortable hug by a bike joined to Subash who was trying to apologise for not turning up the other night when we went to dinner without him. I at last got a picture of the jet-black male Koel, about the size of a slim jackdaw with fierce red eyes. They make a lot of noise but are rather shy and are usually seen too late flying very directly away.

I finished my 3 lectures on photosynthesis and had to then pluck up the courage to tell Srinivasulu that I would not be lecturing until Monday as I had the Biochemistry lecture in the afternoon and Lazare is coming Friday and Saturday. He was ok about it but used it as a chance to persuade me to give some lectures to the final year students next week. One of the research students gave me a lift back to the guest house where I was expecting Imran and Gopi from Chittoor but there was a note on my chair on the veranda saying that they had had to return to Chittoor but might come back at five in the afternoon. I felt surprisingly relieved as I think the heat is making me idle. As I fumbled with my huge padlock on my door I was jumped on by Imran "good joke sir". They were soon on the computer creating very good composite pictures using photoshop. Imran re-wrote history as he would like it with that nice photo of Libby, Johnny and Hugh sitting at the table of a restaurant outside overhanging the Verdun gorge. Johnny is no more, replaced by a self-satisfied Imran. [Don't panic I have the originals]. I have still failed to get good pictures of the elephants so ran out across the sandy

courtyard every time I hear the typical bells approaching. They were clearly not very specific bells as they were always ox carts. My biochemistry Department lecture was at 3.15, and typically no-one came to collect me, so I walked too briskly the 20 minute walk and collapsed in an unenthusiastic heap in Partasarathy's office. He talks nervous gibberish most of the time and made me sit with the other 3 staff for 15 minutes nibbling dry biscuits. They were not interested in talking so I had to chatter inanely while we waited for our tea in tiny fragile plastic beakers. The staff then drifted away and I was led into the lab/lecture theatre for my lecture. They have doubled the students now to about 24 per year so it was packed with some perched up on the window ledges. This made it worthwhile compared with some events there in the past where only half the people turn up. I had to sit at the front while being introduced in a ludicrous performance by P. At one time he just stood silently staring down at his closed notebook. I suspect that he had prepared some notes of introduction in it but had lost the will to open it. The students seemed accustomed to this odd behaviour and sat looking at him expectantly. My old friend Rajiv (res student) sat at the back grinning at me. He has made my lecture an official lecture of the Indian Biochemists Society so muttered about that. Then they were told that I was a great biochemist who had written several papers in International journals and helped produce a book. He is obviously aggrieved that I go every year to the Virology Department now so he emphasised to them that Biochemistry was my mother department (in my first bit of talk I gave them a bit of my version of my history - in which the parent department was NV Naidu's Botany Department which then became virology and microbiology. I gave them the expected 80 minute lecture, illustrated by chalk only on the same old tiny blackboard with flaking surface. They seemed to enjoy and so did I once I got going. At the end I was formally handed an official brown envelope from the Society containing my honorarium of 200 rupees (<£3) for which I was of course charmingly grateful. We then had three minutes silence after questions and 'doubts' were invited. Of course none were forthcoming and after the fourth repeat of "if there are no further questions" then I ask you to thank our dearly beloved professor Chris Anthony for his lecture" which produced relieved applause

I was led out of the room and remembering from previous experience that it was their professor that inhibited them I made some excuse "I will remain behind for some valuable interaction with the students" I did that and had them all clammering around with a lot of questions - mainly from the research students. It often seems that the best social practice is to ask someone's name as if this then creates some valuable bond. So I did this with a few of them and was told by many "I am Ravi, Priya etc and I am a Previous MSc student". I am still unable to cope with this surreal use of the word previous and want to ask "yes OK, but what are you doing now". I rejected, for my own safety, Partasarathy's offer of a scooter back to the guest house and pretended that I needed to see Rajiv about his thesis. In fact he did want to see me about the corrections I had made before a safe drive on his Hero Honda back to photoshop.

While sorting out a few things in my cupboard I then had a horrible experience of finding that much of my money has disappeared. One and a half of my stapled packs of 10,000 rupees has gone. I usually keep them hidden away but then remembered that while sorting other stuff in the cupboard I may have left them in the open. The only person who could have taken them is my friendly room cleaner. I must now empty every cupboard etc onto the bed and repack but I have searched every where already so know I will not find them. So, a total of 16,000 rupees has gone. I was expecting to be able to change them back for UK money at the end - they were emergency money only. There is no financial problem and I will get it back on insurance but I felt awful with the usual extra humiliating feeling that to some extent it was my fault. I have never been so careless before although I have become very trusting and have not hidden things away here. While he cleaned the room two days

ago I necessarily sat outside. I was not going to tell Imran but he kept on pestering me "Chris why are you so dull, is it your health, shall we go, what is the matter, come on Chris". So in irritation I told him and he immediately changed to a gentle charming friend who made me sit outside on the veranda - "please don't cry Chris, it is only worldly goods and chattels, it is our health and our friends that are important". I told him that I did not want it mentioned to the staff here until I am certain it has gone. His father will get a senior police friend here to write the report that is necessary for insurance purposes and I will probably do nothing else. If it is not the cleaner then the suspicion would lose him his job and he may not get another. If it is him, it will still be impossible to prove and will make a nasty feeling. I have now bolted the stable door and locked everything in my suitcase. Of course within 10 minutes Imran had told one of the senior staff because he came to say that he wanted my room key so that the men can inspect my plumbing (the room's plumbing). Imran jumped in and told them that this was not possible that I must be there because I have had 20,000 rupees stolen. This seemed to make little impression on the man and I then had to cancel the report, telling him that I must first search thoroughly. The men inspected, wrote their report and left me with a cold pipe jetting water at the wall instead of the gentle silent trickle I tolerated previously.