

## IndiaDiary2011

**16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> Jan.** *I am writing this Wednesday evening in SV University guest house room 203, listening to ENYA.*

16<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup>. Jan. This year's visit started the Saturday night before leaving before dawn on Sunday morning. I went with Libby and Hugh to the King's Speech and then to have nice dinner in ASK; good plan. Up at 5.0 and away with English rose collection car to terminal 5. It took only one hour, leaving 3 hours before my BA flight expanded to 4 by a delay while they waited for my flight – from South Africa. I had a breakfast of kit kat. On the plane sat next to a manager of computer programmers visiting a client in Chennai. Poor chap had to be up for a meeting at 0.800 after landing at 01.00. *Had enough of Enya so onto Haydn str quartets.* Lots of babies and little girls colonised my part of the cabin but they cried so hard for the first hour that they slept the rest of the journey. Dull food but interesting company plus the whole of the Sunday Times to get through. Watched the film about the founding of Facebook [ ]. John Prabakar had promised that he or his man would be there to meet me and sure enough there was a man with a Prof. Chris placard before we reached immigration who took me rapidly through the DIPLOMAT channel. He then sat on the side while I got money and waited for my case. It was one of the last off so took about 45 minutes. I got Moin on mobile easily and he assured me he was outside. As I cleared customs 3 friends of John descended on me to grab bags and take them off to the car. I had met them previously apparently. John was not well enough to come. Moin's smile lit up the crowds of waiting friends as we went through the exit. We eventually all met up to hammer on the roof of our car to wake the driver. I was just longing to collapse on a bed but had to watch complicated negotiations. I then found that they were discussing the best route so that we could go past John's house to say hello on the way to Mahabalipuram. I put on a tough act and said no – we go direct. I will meet John tomorrow. Two of the friends lived at the same house so my plan meant they had to go all the way to M and then back home. My guilt was imperceptible. Poor Moin had come all the way from his home to Chennai then by car to airport which he reached at about 8,00, so he had a 5 hour wait. It took 50 minutes to M where the red-eyed reception clerk had to be unrolled from his shroud on the floor to take my details. Our room was a mirror image of previous rooms so I always had to avoid peeing in the cupboard. After a short sleepy chat we drifted asleep accompanied by background sea and the AC cutting in and out. It was the last day of the Pongal holiday so the hotel was almost full of Indian families. We had breakfast about mid morning and lunch not long after, with familiar staff stopping by to say hello and ask if madam is coming. I drifted gently about the pool on my back with ears underwater and nose sniffing the huge dragonflies. We both slept in the afternoon and then I walked up to the village in the north in the setting sun taking too many 'one photo sir'. We watched part 1 of Brian Cox wonders of the solar system and then a bit of Pole to Pole, both acquiring stiff necks from watching while lying on beds with the computer between us. Suddenly felt hungry so went to have a quick dinner only to find a coachload of Germans from Hamburg occupying the attention of waiters. We shared chicken byriani and chicken kadai with chapattis and half a litre of water each. Slept well.

**18<sup>th</sup> Jan.** Hot inflated Puris for breakfast. Swimming, reading, sleeping, chatting. John phoned to say he could not come because he was still ill and Moin said he thought he said he was in hospital. I will phone tomorrow to check. As arranged. The Kalyan car with Mohan the usual good driver arrived at lunch time and then took us at 4.30 into town. Moin was not really interested but came so that he could fill up my phone card. My call home earlier had used up 80% of the balance. Because the driver as usual knew better than me he dumped us at the far end of town so we ended on the beach on the far side of the shore temple. It was very crowded but therefore quite colourful and fun once I accepted that it would still be light enough to take picture after we negotiated the rocks around the temple. Everywhere is cleaner and better decorated each year. The old Luna Magica looked too neat. Moin likes to eat at the hotel which was ok as I have such nice memories of the restaurants round there with Libby and Surya it would be a pity to dilute them. At the Golden Sun I tested the 'continental' style fish and chips. It was dull overfried bits of fish and a scatter of thin chips. Strawberry milk shake made up for it.

**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> January.** Had a poor night waking half a dozen times. I nearly finished my book. Excellent 1966 Kingsley Amis *The Anti-Death League*. I bought it from my bookshop for 90p; excellent. We were soon packed and paid and breakfasted on toast and jam. The 4.5 hr drive to Tirupati has lost most of

its charm I find. The villages are all much bigger and nearly merge with the sprawling towns Chengupatta, Kanchipuram, Ankorram and Tirrutani which were very hot dusty and noisy. It was very very hot in our little tin box. Because of last years farce with useless cars Ravi had sent us a nearly new car. Mohan drove it very well, its modern acceleration making the most of opportunities. It was such a relief to reach the Ghats [hills] and then to see the hills of Tirumula in the distance. Instead of the usual nerve-wracking arrival with staff not wanting me to have my room, we had the opposite. There were 6 staff standing grinning and escorting us to my usual room. Everything works: AC, water heater, loo flush, all lights etc. They found a me little bench – smaller than last year's but ok as I have a small chair with my lovely black bag sitting on it. Moin gave me a little device for my computer that lets me get online in the guest house. So I looked at my emails where I found that all those to whom I had sent my review draft had sent very encouraging replies and usually a few small corrections or suggestions. Very encouraging, making it easier and more attractive to get down to finishing it while I am here. This is a history of the serine cycle and ethylmalonyl-CoA pathways for Science Progress. My 'helpers include Birgit Alber, Hans Kornberg, Pat Goodwin, Mary O'Connor, Mila Chistoserdova, Tobi Erb, Ivan Berg, and Georg Fuchs.

We were then given an excellent lunch, the reason for which became apparent later.

After lunch I phone Sai Gopal who soon arrived very proud of himself. He came with a tall smiling student from 2005 who I remembered called Daya. He was so excited that I remembered his name that I had the slightly embarrassing thing of him going on his knees to touch my feet to ask my blessing. Roughing his hair affectionately seems to be appropriate. I asked Sai Gopal if I was to start my lectures tomorrow. "No sir, all the students have been sent home until 23<sup>rd</sup>". There is an all india interuniversity youth festival. 2000 participant from all states doing plays, music, mime, dancing etc. All the guest house rooms were to be used only for the teachers etc. So Sai Gopal went to the VC to explain that the reason that his Department got an A in the last assessment [and therefore a large increase in government funding] was because I was there helping the presentation [last year]. So a letter was sent to the steward saying that I am now [promotion] a senior UGC visiting Professor so must have my usual room. As a result of the horrible journey I had decided that I will certainly not go to Bangalore to Vinay's father; the shortest journey would be more than 6 hours. I told SG this and he said no need no need. You do not need the £400 Chowdappa had offered because my Visiting professor status comes with much more than that. This was a typical Sai Gopal, forgetting that I need the UGC money for my expenses. Saigopal then told me he would come at 5.30 to take me to the auditorium to watch some of the performances. He said the VC had invited me to dinner afterwards. Moin left, I had a hot bathe then slept to be woken by Sai gopal "come sir it is 5.30; why are you sleeping". I was not asleep at 5.30 – it was now 6.15. We went off to the auditorium, lit up with thousands of fairy lights, as was the main Senate house tower which had tethered to it hundreds of feet above a lit up spherical balloon like an artificial moon. We went into the auditorium to watch a play about Rama that I could not follow. The auditorium is the building that looks like a deflated airship, sagging in the middle. It is cooled by ranks of cooling fans. VIPs like us could just stroll in and sit in any VIP vacant seat. It was a nice relaxed atmosphere with families and performers and university people mixed up and walking about during the performances. The plays were in a competition and each had 10 minutes. They were counted down on a screen on the side to make sure they did not overrun unfairly. After a short time we left to go and lock up the department, where there was another past student come to get a letter from SaiGopal to take to an interview the next day in Chennai. I had another opportunity to bestow my blessing on the kneeling student who then leapt up and hugged me "I am so happy you have returned sir". I must be careful not to get too biblical about this. On the way out I was met by Sunil who is now a research scholar. He is the friend who used his phone so much that it had no numbers on it. I was very glad to see him because he was having difficulty getting a PhD place. I was then taken to the VC's dinner. In fact it was a buffet dinner in a huge complex of tents attached to the womens hostel. I was really the guest of Naidu the steward of the guest house who had organised the meals in this tent for the 2000 participants, using the cooks and staff of the guest house who kept some for themselves and us. It was 7.15 and dinner did not start till 7.45 so I had to be taken round various staff to be introduced, SG then went off to do something saying he would be back, leaving me in the charge of a short smiling tubby man who I then realised was Manohar, my small thin dummy security guard of 15 years ago. He is now a senior driver and was waiting for his boss. His English is poor so to make life easier I left him and went off for a stroll around the campus taking photos of lit up buildings with my little camera. As I returned Manohar grabbed me and

took me off to the head of the queue to get my bindi barji [auberginie] and chapattis etc. Very very good. He then left while I self consciously struggled with my meal on a leaf. When I caught a boy laughing at me he came over and introduced himself. He is about 16 and plays classical flute. He introduced me to his teacher and they both wrote down their details and asked me to get in touch in the next few days. I missed his performance but I know the room in B block where he lives and they suggest I call in in the evening to hear him play. We were interrupted by SG who appeared with his empty plate to drag me off to meet the VC. In fact we had already chatted but I had not been certain if he was the VC [I knew that I had met him last year and he was the only one wearing a tie]. I was then dragged from one group to another to be introduced to all his friends. It was all very enjoyable but I do feel I have to put on a good show. At last I was driven home on his scooter, passing my new flute friend who waved us down to give me his U-tube address where he is playing his flute.

*It is now 10.40 so I shall sleep. It was so nice to hear you libby and hugh just after we had arrived.*

**Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> January.** I slept in rather short bursts, woken by the usual mix of howling dogs, roaring buses, bellowing trains and text messages. I woke to a slightly misty promising morning and decided I would sort out my domestic arrangements instead of going for bird walk. I knew I would have a lot of walking today anyway. I walked up to the little shops past the entrance to the dairy farm near the new temple. There is always a friendly atmosphere there with the old men sitting on a stone bench drink tea from tiny plastic cups which then are scattered at their feet. With some difficulty I bought some biscuits, some ready-salted crisps, 3 litres of water and a bunch of bananas. I could not face the 20 minute walk down to the campus for breakfast so had crisps and bananas. I checked my emails [!!] then did a rare thing; I caught an auto down to Gandhi road in daylight. Far less traffic and fewer people than at night but it looks a bit grubbier. I found my friendly Gogula stores and bought a lungi and cotton bedsheets. Then opposite at a typical tiny Gandhi rd shop bought 12 coathangers and 3 little mats. Finished my successful expedition by getting a table lamp and 5 metre extension cable.

After fast auto home, Sury bought me a huge glass of sweet cardamom tea and asked after madam. I told him you had especially asked me to say hello to him from you so he was very excited. They have provided a bench in my room similar to last year but it is lower and smaller. But I found another small bench and covered it with the lungi so I am now set up in comfort. I had been especially invited to the afternoon show by 2 nice ladies – to see their 10 piece traditional orchestra, scheduled for 2.00 so I walked down to have lunch in the big tent which was again excellent. I watched some singing with drummers then we were told that the stuff I wanted to see was delayed till 3.00 so I went over to the department to chat with sunil and 3 other new research scholars. When I got back the auditorium was packed and very very hot but I managed to find a seat near the entrance at the end of a row for a bit of breeze and easy escape. I guess there must have been more than a 1000 in the audience who were very energetic and enthusiastic. Every performer was overamplified and as half were drummers it was deafening but exciting, with audience leaping up and dancing between the seats. I managed to sit through 3 groups until acquired a headache and retreated without seeing my friends. I had a teatime snack of some vegetable in batter with sweetish chutney then walked home in hot sun. I soon recovered after a foot wash and Sury's 2 cups of tea in new porcelain cups before sitting for half an hour in the setting sun on my roof garden. Imran called to say that he has just moved to Bangalore and hopes to come soon to visit. Did some photo stuff then another walk down to have dinner in the tent at 7.45. The street lights were off so it is a bit hazardous as the pavement has huge hidden holes and the road has traffic with poor headlights. Again, dinner was very good, eaten off a leaf on a plate with little white plastic teaspoon. I met no one I knew and so walked back home in order to be here to meet, as arranged, Sunil at 8.45. It is now 9.45 and no sign of him. As I walked in one of the staff came up to ask did I want dinner as they had some for me! Sai Gopal crashed in as I was chatting on phone with Moin, to say goodbye for a few days as he is off tonight to Annantapur University to be examiner there. He offered to arrange that staff here will bring me idlis tomorrow so I do not have to go to university for breakfast.

So here endeth the first full day. It was nice to chat with Libby about squirrels eating nuts in the cold while I listened to them [chipmunks] squeaking outside my door in the heat.

Goodnight everyone.

**Friday 21<sup>st</sup> January.** *I am writing this at 9.20 in the evening.*

After writing my diary last night I watched my DVD of a play by Alan Bennett: the Insurance man. About Kafka. Brilliant. Slept as usual with noisy intervals. Went for stroll to my usual place near pig farm to find that the building work is finished so the route to one of my walks is blocked. I found an alternative. Saw magpie robins, bulbuls, G orioles, common ioras, drongos, parakeets, mynahs, sunbirds, black headed cuckoo shrikes, coucal, paddy birds, Wood Sandpiper, little green bee eaters, coppersmiths, palm swifts, little brown dove, spotted dove, common wood shrike, babblers, including the comic little rufous bellied babbler. I think I overdid the walking yesterday as my feet ached today. Fortunately the guest house has seen sense and now provides meals for those from the festival who are living here [mainly judges]. Excellent meals all day; I am writing this while slightly bloated from nice dinner. I spent the rest of the day sorting out more of my review, especially fitting in new stuff based on comments of Hans Kornberg and Birgit Alber. I had nice breaks reading the Hindu in the sun with glasses of tea served by Venu, the tall slim always smiling helpful boy of last year.

I emailed Chowdappa and Vinay to say that I would not be going to Bangalore. Chowdappa phoned later and seems to have accepted this. Imran now has my phone number so it is like the old days with missed calls and texted jokes. He is coming from Bangalore for a visit on Monday. At 5.00 I went to the dairy farm which remains peaceful with its sweet smell of contented cows mixed with incense for lord Krishna. They have laid more stone paths and some foundations for buildings but most of the area remains fields. I managed to coincide with a train each time at the crossing but it is quite entertaining. Moin just phoned to say that they have been given an extra day holiday so he is going to his home [8 hours from Hyderabad] to see his mum. Her blood pressure has now dropped considerably and she is feeling much better [the day before leaving he had texted me to get me to bring a bp monitor for her].

This afternoon I had an email from David Colquhoun asking about an alternative medicine expert at Southampton [I was able to get him the info he needed]. He is continuing his great job of hounding the homeopaths, Prince Charles in particular. I then found this excerpt from Express report on a *conference of the anti-monarchy group Republic*. Charles's "complicated psychology" and "obsessive compulsive" tendencies formed much of the discussion, headlined: "An activist king?" Panellist David Colquhoun, professor of pharmacology at University College London and an outspoken critic of Charles and his belief in alternative therapies, said the "Integrated" in the prince's recently wound-up Foundation For Integrated Health, was "a euphemism for untrue". He added: "The gulf between alternative therapy goes from the not very sensible to the downright barmy. The Prince of Wales is really at the fruitcake end. There's nothing in his patients' guide that can be taken seriously." I am now reading Irving's book A son of the circus. I have spent too long today at this computer so will stop and continue reading it.

**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> January.** Had a slightly lonely but very productive day. I usually don't feel like doing much when I wake from a disturbed night but I have to get up as the hard bed ceases to be attractive by about 5.30. It was a bit cloudy but I set out for a stroll up past the NCC Nagar opposite the guest house. As soon as I set out I start to feel cheerful. I spent the whole day at the guest house working on the review, doing lots of comparative equation balances, mainly sitting on the roof in intermittent sun and cloud with cool breeze. I tried to make arrangements for the evening but no one is answering phones. Had a nice phone call from Libby and Hugh who had been playing Haydn quartets in the morning. I miss my cello. I was told that there is no dinner here tonight so decided to work until later then go to town. I then realized that it was 8.00 and I had no energy to go to town so planned to wait till I am really hungry and stuff myself with bananas. Having resolved to do this Venu banged on the door and said dinner is now available. The festival finished this afternoon but of course there are many people who have to wait for trains etc so they set up dinner here. I had dinner with a nice man from Kerala whose son studied at Cheetams [sp?] and is now at Manchester Northern where Mary was. He is a pianist and is performing Bartok's 2<sup>nd</sup> piano concerto next week; he must be very good. I came back upstairs to finish another section of the review but was disturbed by a huge influx of excited festival performers so went down to see if my flute friend or his teacher are here. They are not but I had some nice chats with some turbaned students from Punjab who were singers and drummers. They leave soon after midnight on a 2 day train journey home. It is a remarkable atmosphere as the students come from all over India, each state having its own language.

I have at last made contact with flute Charlie. I had hoped to visit his family tomorrow [Sunday] but when he phoned he said he is busy with work so will come and see me some time tomorrow. He is sensible so said he will phone before coming. *It is now 11.30 so to bed; goodnight.*

**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> January** I am writing this after dinner in the evening; what I would really like to be doing is slumping in front of tele with a glass of wine and family. It is a week since I set off from home. I was woken at 7.00 by Venu bringing a large glass of sweet cardamom tea. It was cloudy and as I thought I might be walking some way today I decided against an immediate walk and did some review work, interrupted by Venu looking pleased with himself carrying 2 idlis, some sauce and a big dosa masala; all very nice. I worked until 10.30 and then set off for Thumulagunta through the dairy farm. The sun had come up but there was still some cloud and beautiful summer breeze. There is now a hole in the wall at the South side by the well, bypassing the long hot walk from the little temple. One of the village boys passed me on a bike so by the time I came into the village there was a reception committee waiting. Balaji was "at his duty sir". He now has a good job in the University accounts department [10,000rup/month]. His nice retired father was there so I went in and sat on the bed surrounded by and covered by my young friends from last year. I got them all to write their ages in my notebook which was a big success. The average age is about 11 but I would have put it at 8. The oldest seems no more than 11 but he is 16. I passed on Libby's best wishes to Balaji's parents and nice sister who acted as my interpreter. After a nice cup of camp coffee we went through the photo ritual and the parade through the village, stopping for group photos of children and men and women. We called at the house of Venkataramana who is even bigger and more like a corrupt film policeman. It became very hot on the way back but I had to extend the long walk to buy some water from a nice giggly man near the little temple. While sitting in the sun on the roof after I got back Venu came to ask about lunch which he had to go and find for me. I told him no sambar [watery pepper soup] or curd rice [what it sounds like] – just chapatti and dal please. An hour later he turned up to tell me they don't make chapattis until after 4.0 so he had bought me some curd rice in a plastic box. It looked like rice pudding with a blob of jam in the middle. This turned out to be very spicy red chilli pickle. It was wonderful and sent me to sleep for an hour after I neutralized it with my first chocolate of the trip. While reading *Whoops* [about the world financial crisis] on the roof my slim friend Sunil arrived with an old school friend for a nice chat in the shade of the ashoka trees as the sun went down. Venu turned up unbidden with a big glass of tea for me and tiny plastic beakers for the boys.

As they got up to go flute Charlie arrived and stayed for an hour chatting. He rarely plays the flute now and concentrates on keyboard, running his own 'orchestra'. It all seems rather precarious as some seasons are inauspicious for weddings etc. After he left it took some willpower to get ready to go to town to eat. Venu later said he would have got me some dinner but I think that would be a bad habit to get into – I don't want to get too housebound. So I set off for Sinduri park down the completely dark main road. The lights only start near the university entrance where there were a few lurking autos. None of the 8 staff in the restaurant had been there last year. I had lovely dinner of butter roti and butter paneer masala followed by the best vanilla icecream anywhere. I walked homewards through the temple area and down Gandhi road. It does not feel a year since I was doing this. Pleased to find I enjoyed it as always. Imran just phoned to say he is on the bus from Bangalore and will arrive 4.30 in the morning. Moin just phoned to say that he is on the bus from his home to Hyderabad and will arrive there at 8.00 in the morning.

Here is a remarkable thing – taken from *Whoops* to illustrate how few people understand what is meant by risk etc:

A particular disease affects 1 in 1000 of the population.

I think I have it so go for a test. I am positive in the test. I ask how reliable is the test; It is 95% reliable.

SO I conclude that there is a 95% chance that I have the disease.

BUT the correct conclusion is that I have a 2% chance of having it!

If 1000 people take the 95% reliable test then 50 would be identified as having the disease.

But we know that only 1 in 1000 actually has it. So my chance of having it is 1 in 50 or 2%.

Good night.

**Monday 24<sup>th</sup> January.** I am writing this 8.0 am Tuesday with the background noise of a rising Imran – coughing hawking shouting into his phone. Had a terrible night. There is a bird called the brain fever bird, a large cuckoo. All night it 'sings'. A double note call repeated on a rising scale getting more frenzied. It does this continuously if I am trying to sleep. A howling dog chose to set up home at the end of the corridor etc etc. At last I got to sleep after reading at 2.0am. I had left the door unlocked for Imran but when he arrived at 4.00am he crashed in and set up home like a cuckoo. He had had a terrible journey from Hyderabad. It is

always necessary to buy a ticket [for sleeper] many days ahead; you are put on a waiting list; if lucky the ticket is confirmed and you have a bunk. Imran's ticket was confirmed but he had to change bunks twice in the night. So of course I had to have all this story. Eventually got to sleep. Because of the Telengana dispute [some mad politicians want to divide Andhra Pradesh into two states] teaching is 4 weeks behind and 1<sup>st</sup> years are doing exams. So I have no morning lectures. Venu brought us breakfast of dosa and puri masala; very good. I spent morning mixed between checking lectures for afternoon – industrial microbiology- on the roof in the cool breeze, and answering Imran's questions and looking at some videos he brought with him. Most of the time he is asleep. *Another interruption as he has started to read one of my novels; "what is meant by Vowed?" It means promised: "why don't you stupid English fellows used the proper words?"* Imran went down to Athidi restaurant to buy good lunch of rotis and channa masala [chick peas] which we ate on the roof. The food came in small sealed tinfoil packs – better than usual string-tied poly bags. Actually, I have solved these. The very fine string is not tied; so you pull the free ends and it whirls round, opens and empties onto your plate in one magical trick. I impressed Moin so much with this first accident that he thought I had rehearsed for a year. Sai Gopal drove me to my afternoon lecture. Virology has now been split into virology and microbiology departments and they have also assimilated staff and students from another college. To accommodate the teaching they have a large room in a nearby building,

previously used for storing administration files which are now piled to the ceiling and poking out of the windows in other rooms in the building. It has not been cleaned [except for the lecture room] for some time so I wade through miscellaneous junk, paper, bricks, polybags etc to get there. Only a third of the students were there. Wednesday is Republic day so many have stayed home to have an extended holiday. There was only one boy and the girls were divided into left [final year students who I knew] and right [new students from Cavary]. I did a slow chatty lecture so that the missing students would not have too much catching up to do. My duty after lectures is to return to SG's office and have tea from a huge mug [International Rice Research Institute]. Today I had to listen to SG discussing the purchase of equipment on the huge grant he has administered for the university. He was impressive and so was the salesman, a biochemistry graduate from Madras University. I was driven back to guest house to find Imran asleep [good] so I could sit and read Whoops on the roof until Charlie came again for a chat and the sun went down. He wanted advice on cameras so we had a long debate with Imran about this. They both explained things wrongly to me, forgetting that I am the only one owning a camera and with a few years of experience. Charlie was planning to spend £150 so we persuaded him that half that is enough. *Imran is now playing with my small camera, experimenting with panorama mode; could be useful and it is keeping him relatively quiet.* Charlie gave me a small bar of chocolate for a present; so do I take my big bar of chocolate for his children as planned when I visit?. After Charlie left we set off by auto to Sinduri Park where I had good dinner. Imran is the only person I know who when asked if he enjoyed his dinner [paid for by me] does not politely say yes; "no chris it was not good". We then had a nice wander back down Gandhi road, calling in at Surya Suitings, a tiny clothes shop [like a large airing cupboard] where Sasi's relatives work. I received the usual very happy smiling welcome, followed by frustration that they don't speak English. I collected his present phone number for my annual chat – he is now working in Bangalore. We rambled around with Imran looking for a supermarket, ignoring my certain knowledge that there is none. He spent 20 minutes buying jockey shorts and singlet emptying the packets all over the shop. The Music School in Balaji colony on the way home was brightly lit and noisy so while Imran did more browsing I went in and stood at the back of an open air concert, part of a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary festival. Some teenage students of the school saw me standing and after a little nervous debate brought a chair over to me and were delighted when I took the chair and put it beside theirs. It always seems acceptable to ignore the musicians and chat [if at the back of the audience]. Had the usual problem of all wanting to speak but only one coherent speaker who acted as interpreter and go between. They are all students of the school and want me to visit. Stupidly I did not write their names when Imran turned up to drag me away. He wanted to walk the 1.5 km back to the guest house but I called an auto. After more chatting I convinced Imran that I did not want to watch a movie so he settled down to watch one that he had brought with him while I had a short read and a long sleep.

**Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January.** *I am writing this Wednesday evening and have already forgotten what I did yesterday but I will try.* I had a typical confused day that is inevitable with Imran here as he always feels he

has to have an opinion about everything. He woke up as I was ordering breakfast so had to join in. I prefer to make life easier for staff who cycle into town to get it but of course Imran had to make it complicated. Anyway it was good. We drifted through the day chatting and doing a bit of work, answering Mila's email etc while answering Imran's questions about English usage. He left me to sleep, lecture and work in afternoon while he went off to see his uncle in Tirupati. My lecture was enjoyable but it was very hot and I had to compete with the fans [ceiling]. I tried to leave immediately but I was chased down by one of the secretarial staff on his motorbike to be dragged back for my regulation mug of tea. Actually it was a good thing as I then bumped into Sunil to make an arrangement for dinner. When Imran got back we had a nice chat in the setting sun on the roof with tea. At last I heard the truth about the loan I had to urgently provide 2 years ago. He was honest but stupid. Everything is underway to get his money back and so he will repay in the next few months. If I have energy later I will fill this in. At about 5.30 he left to get his money back on his train ticket so he can go by bus. He found online that he was still No. 6 on the train waiting list, so he would have another dreadful journey. The bus is more expensive but it got him home by 4.00 in morning. Had a nice dinner in Sinduri park [butter roti and paneer pasand, then butterscotch icecream]. Then usual nice auto drive back through a winding down Tirupati to have a long dozy chat with quiet Sunil who I eventually ejected at about 11.30.

**Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January. REPUBLIC DAY** a holiday to celebrate the signing of the constitution. *I am writing* this is at the end of a nice uneventful day. I was woken at 7.0 with a big glass of sweet cardamom tea by the tall slim smiling Venu. I suppose he has plenty to smile at as I lurch out of bed to open the door to him still with my eyes closed. The morning was cloudy [still warm of course] so I spent 2 hours doing some review work before Venu brought my breakfast of vada; like doughnuts with bits of chilli and peppercorns buried in them, eaten with thin soupy curry. Delicious when hungry. My breakfast the other day arrived in little poly bags tied with very fine string. By accident i performed a magic trick that impressed Venu yesterday. I find they do not tie the string, merely wrap it round 10 times; so i pulled the string from both ends; this rotated the bag at high speed, pulled it open and tipped the contents direct on my plate; Derren Brown eat your heart out. After breakfast more review then walk in warm breeze out to my village for coffee in one house [Balaji's brother and nice sister live there with a little girl who screams when she sees me], followed by tea in another [Balaji's]. In both i sit on a bed surrounded by the village boys who just wander into houses. It is a wonderful relaxed atmosphere. I get them to try to teach me Telugu words; i have very little aptitude but they like me trying. In both houses grannie went off cackling to comb her hair so i can take a photo. I then have the problem of leaving like the Pied piper with the kids hanging on. It is good to feel wanted. I spent the rest of the day improving the figures for the review. I also went through emails with nice long ones from Murali and from Ramachandran. When i start my email i always have to delete a few before i start that are offering viagra or beautiful russian school girls etc. this morning i was about to delete what was obviously similar mail - from Willy George. Luckily i didn't as it was from someone i met at a festival here last week. His son is a pianist at the famous Royal Northern School of Music at Manchester where Mary studied and he wants me to get in touch. I have just returned from dinner with my friend flute charlie - with his son Stephen, my dancing friend. He doesn't do much dancing now but will learn some for my next visit. He is more interested in cricket and got excited to show me his bat. He had just finished his maths tuition. He showed me his books filled with quadratic equations and geometry. The daughter, chattering continuously and wearing pink, wanted me to read everything she has written in her school books. She is 9 yrs and quite sweet and obviously very intelligent. The nice grandparents were there; the grandfather, Christopher Dass has managed keep of the drink for 3 years now. As always the family had a duty to feed me to excess. I have been only vegetarian for last 10 days so i now feel very bloated on chicken biryani. There is a dog howling outside my door but i cant find anything to throw. A friend here threw his shoe at a dog to get it to go away; he succeeded but the dog took the shoe with him. I nearly fell asleep and woke as my computer started to slide to the floor so i better stop and sleep.

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> January.** A really nice day. Had the usual disturbed night with 2 reading intervals: John Irving *A son of the circus*. It seems the birds have not gone away – or they have all returned. I went my usual bird walk out to the wilder parts behind the pig research place. Large parts of this have been dug for the red clay and I assume the little green bee eaters nest in the 5 ft high 'cliffs'. The air was filled with their happy sound. Saw most of usual birds. In the distance I watched a fight between a golden oriole and the black headed sort. Breakfast was four idlis and a wada with red curry and coconut chutney; delicious. It was

promising to be a very hot day so I washed shirts and all my undies which are now draped around the roof. Spent the rest of the morning improving the figures in the review and sitting on the roof preparing afternoon lecture on fermentation. After lunch I fell asleep and after 40 minutes was woken by Sai Gopal who had had a meeting which went on too long so I started my lecture 15 minutes late. A few more students turned up. Only one boy who of course sat by himself at the back. It is rare for them to answer no as this usually indicates nervousness that they don't know something; but after one hour I asked them if I should continue for another 10 minutes and was amazed to get three instant NO responses from girls who then nervously giggled. So I stopped and wandered across to microbiology for my traditional tea which I had with Sunil standing on the corridor/balcony looking out over the hot distant hills. I then dropped in on Biochemistry Department where the students gave me Edwin's new number. I found the head, Thyagaraju, at home and within 3 minutes he got me to agree to give some standard bioenergetics lectures the week after next. Other staff then drifted in – Appa Rao and Murthi. I walked home through the hot afternoon sun while arranging on phone for Edwin to come to dinner later. I felt I had had enough walking for the day so spent an hour on review then the best time as the sunset sitting on the roof reading Energy Plants and Man by David Walker of Sheffield University: mainly conventional photosynthesis stuff with interesting history and a few political/ecological diatribes. He quoted nice one from Darlington, describing ecologists: *the incompetent in pursuit of the incomprehensible*.

Edwin turned up at 6.40, so happy that we had met up at last. He is as nice as I remember and we had a very nice relaxed evening eventually going out to the Kalyan for dinner. I told him I didn't want to go in a shared auto but when an empty one stopped he negotiated a price for it to be a private auto – same as for normal auto. As he had no other passengers [who pay 5 rupees each] we all got a good deal. Ravi the travel agent was there so we were able to pay for the Mahabalipuram car. Had good dinner of butter roti and Kadai subji paneer followed by butterscotch ice cream. Edwin grabbed the bill, insisting that he is celebrating having me as his guest. It is about half the price of Sindhuri park and it was excellent and the service is friendly as I am recognized as Surya's friend. It is now 10.30 and Edwin has just left. I am feeling a bit sunburned and full up and sleepy so will collapse onto my hard bed. Goodnight .

**Friday 28<sup>th</sup> January. Had a lovely day.** Had usual disturbed night. Venu knocked at 7.15 to give me my big glass of tea. Beautiful walk up past NCC Nagar toward the forest. Usual birds singing all the way, with sunbirds making a fuss of me. It started off cool enough for a west then within an hour it was baking. I told venu I wanted breakfast at 9.0 so he reprimanded me when I turned up at 9.10 to receive to newspaper wrapped dosa masala. I spent most of the day on the review. I thought I'd finished but I had sent it to Ivan Berg in Moscow to check his bit. He sent it back back within 24 hours with some useful stuff. I had put a reference in twice and he gave me 3 new references so that was a load of work re-numbering everything and another page to write. It is nice to know it will be useful. Had a nice confusion over lunch. The small boss man came and took my order. 15 minutes later 2 others came out onto the roof and asked again. I told them [sort of] that no need I had already ordered. 10 minutes later the first man came and asked why I had cancelled lunch. So I re-orderd. 20 minutes later it was delivered. I started to unwrap it and Venkatesh arrived from the department to say I had to go there for lunch with the examiners. This was provided on a long table in the lab with the faint atmosphere of chromatography solvents. Big wet banana leaves were slapped down in front of us and dollops of dal and rice and veggie stuff spattered over it with a banana and chilli crisps and papadom. Fortunately as I left the guest house I had grabbed a plastic spoon so it was not too uncomfortable. I excused myself quickly to go off to my 2.00 lecture on butanol production. The building is only 100 yards away but it is far enough to get very hot. Nice lecture and nice students with the lecture disturbed by a gang of men stripped to their undies unloading the room packed to the ceiling with admin papers into a big lorry to take them away for sale at an auction to the highest bidder. I finished at 3.20 and forced myself to go back to sai gopals for my tea but it had not arrived iiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii Whoops I fell asleep. Better stop till tomoorw goodnight

Contd. *I am writing this Sunday evening in the empty time and space left by Moin going off on his 14 hour train ride to Hyderabad.* I sat around for 20 minutes then decided I would walk home. As I set off I arrived with Venkatesh who said I must drink it and he would give me a lift back. Sulking I told him I had to go to Biochemistry Department; so I did and found Murthy and had a useful discussion about what lectures I would give there. Then very hot walk back to guest house for big glass of tea and peaceful read on the

roof. Edwin called and asked if I had plans for evening; as I had none we arranged to go to dinner and he would bring his friend Rangaswamy. They arrived with an auto 45 minutes late, and being hungry and with no will for making decisions we went again to Kalyan Residency. Again the food was good [better than last year] and it was only £4 for 3 meals. We walked back down Gandhi road as all the shops were closing and pavement sellers bedding down for the night in their bundles of rags. We found a little shop opposite Gogula stores [lungi shop] to buy a nice grass broom. Edwin and friend came all the way back and stayed for half an hour. It is always more tiring when friends of friends come as I feel I have to perform up to expectations.

**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> January.** I started a good day by walking same as yesterday but more briskly so I walked right out as far as the agric university. Again there were plenty of birds and I got nice picture of common iora [small green and yellow bird that imitates leaves well] and a hoopoe [what a relief]. It was really hot by the time I was back at 9.00 for my idli and wada breakfast collected by smiling Venu. I spent the morning putting my review into the format of the journal to see what it looks like; answer good. I was interrupted by a power cut so quickly closed everything on the laptop as its battery is useless. Then did a thorough clean sweep of my room ready for Moin who will arrive from his home Tadapatri later in the afternoon. I was collected by Sai Gopal to go to my examiner's lunch and while waiting found Venkatesh and arranged for him to print the review, which he did, and to recharge my phone. Sai Gopal insists that they will need the name and address of the person who bought the sim card [Moin]. Not true they need the number only and some money. I had a text message from Airtel 5 minutes into my lecture to tell me they had given me 80 rupees of calls. The class numbers are going up; we now have 3 boys. I set them a problem which comes from the book about the banking crash Whoops – illustrating how easy it is to make wrong assumptions about risk:

A disease affects 1 in 1000 of the population. I test positive for it. The test is 95% accurate. What is the chance I have the disease. The obvious but wrong answer is 95%.

But. If 1000 well people are tested and the test is 95% reliable then 50 will be false positives. That is, there is a 50/1000 or 2% chance that I have the disease. Remarkable innit.

Moin arrived while I was sitting in the late afternoon sun in a nice breeze on the roof. So good to see him. We had tea then went for a short stroll during the sunset around the campus near NCC Nagar. We had chicken biryani made by his mother followed by fruit cake. Then watched some David Attenborough birds then sleep while continuing to chat.

**Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> January.** Had a nice slow waking up with muted mutterings from Moin, wrapped completely in his blanket like a chrysalis. Venu appeared with my glass of tea at 7.00. Very welcome. Good breakfast of idlis and wada. I persuaded Moin to go for a stroll round the dairy farm to say hello to the elephants and camels and a roller – so they haven't abandoned the place. Moin is not used to strolling so I had to hold him back. Got back about 11.10 by which time it was very hot. Venu went by motorbike to Sinduri park to get our nice lunch of chapattis and paneer butter masala, and rice for Moin. Also big tub of curds with sugar for me. Followed later by Christmas cake. Had a chat with Hugh on facebook. As chirpy as ever. I mist have clicked on something of Carl Gore cos we started to hear him instructing someone how to fire an AK47 machine gun. I found I had clicked on his u-tube account. We watched David Attenborough Birds. Gopi phoned to say he is in Chittoor and plans tomorrow to come but has to return after a few hours. Moin had to leave at 5.30 to go and buy some CDs and to the train. Leaving me felling a bit empty with no plans. No reply on phone to Edwin and sunil so I started writing this. Went to Gandhi rd then walked to kalian for a plate of Chinese fried crspsy noodles while reading the story of Henrietta Lacks whose cells [HeLa cells] revolutionised cell biology. Then straight back here. I am writing this while watching A women of no importance by Alan Bennett.

**Monday 31<sup>st</sup> January.** I woke as usual at 6.30 with worse than usual headache and felt uninclined to do anything. But character rose to the surface and and I forced myself to wander off to up to NCC Nagar, got lost and struggled out through the thorny scrub to the back of one of the college buildings. At last I saw my chestnut tree pie; so now I have seen most of my usual favourite birds, they haven't abandoned the area at all. As always the warm morning sun raises morale high enough to last the day. Had what seems to be a standard breakfast of 2 idlis and wada, wonderful when hungry as I usually am. One of the advantages of eating veggie food all the time and of avoiding plates of rice is that I am ready for anything when meals come round. As expected I had a text from Moin to tell me he had survived the 14 hour journey to

Hyderabad but it told that he had a 2 hour delay on the journey so it was 16 hours total. Gopi said he would come from Chittoor by 10.30. At 11 he phoned to say he was on his way and would be late; eventually arrived at 12.30 having been held up by security people cos the chief minister of the state was visiting Chittoor. Lokanardh brought us very nice lunch. So sad - I had to go to lecture at 2.00 and Gopi had to return to Chittoor to get the bus back to Bangalore so he could start work by 10 in morning. Anyway it was very nice to see him. He is slimmer and looking so well and relaxed. He still says he will be married soon but he did not say more and I guessed that he did not want to say more. He is still doing the same call centre job [technical] at 10,000 rupees/month which he says is enough for him.

Boring lecture on citric and glutamic acid production to a full class but without the boys. After the lecture I had tea with a relaxed Sai Gopal, all the external examiners having left. We had a chat about my molecular biology course with the new lecturer who is doing part of the subject, starting with DNA replication, the most difficult subject of all. Last year I was asked to advise on the course so I had spent 2 days working hard on the best possible organization. That was completely ignored. Most of the final year students who I knew are doing insustrial microbiology projects so it is easy to go and chat to them as they drift aimlessly about in the downstairs microbiology labs. Sarath Babu was the most energetic and seemed to know what he was doing. I arranged with him that he would come on his bike to collect me for dinner. Then to Zoology Depart to see if Subramanyam [subbu] is here, as he is rumoured to be. They didn't know but I asked people to tell him I am here then walked back in the hot sun to a big glass of tea from venu and 20 minutes on email, including a long one from john bolbot going into great detail about some aspect of the review; he has an amazing memory for it all. To make the most of the golden afternoon I went for a local stroll near the guest house. I found myself in an odd situation when I was near a house near the railway line of trying to photograph a male Koil which was near and almost in line of site a golden backed woodpecker, while 3 boys were trying to lure me into taking one photo. It was getting dark so I doubt if many are good. Spent the last half hour of daylight on the roof in a cool breeze reading, then as darkness fell moved into my room for a little nap while waiting for Sarath Babu who appeared on time at about 7. A few minutes before that Subbu arrived with a 1<sup>st</sup> year biochemist whom he had taught at a nearby college last year. This was useful as he is in the Biochemistry previous group so I could quiz him to get a feel for the standard I must teach at next week when I am doing bioenergetics. After the usual meandering chat we agreed we would all go to Kalyan for dinner, on 2 bikes. I insisted we must not race and we would go slow. They did go slow but insisted on driving in parallel except when forced apart by heavy traffic; this was almost worse than racing. Had dinner of 2 rice items: veg biryani [very spicy] and sethchuan rice - also hot.

Back through busy Nethaji road [unpleasant racing] to guest house, where I was mobbed by 2<sup>nd</sup> year students who dragged me off to their room to chat. Included slim Bala Ankaiah and others I remembered, all teasing Sarath about how much effort he made to look beautiful and handsome. Edwin then came to drag me off to 2<sup>nd</sup> year biochemists who were good fun, all keen to tell me how good Edwin is. He then managed to part with all the others and took me off by auto to the guest house; he kept it for the return journey. I finished watching Bennett's an Englishman Abroad about Guy Burgess while writing diary. Soon gave in and decided to test the effect on sleep of putting the mattress from 2<sup>nd</sup> bed on top of mine. Feeling twitchy so will go to sleep

Goodnight all

**Tuesday February 1<sup>st</sup>.** Had a really good night. Even when I woke I was comfortable so enjoyed reading. Woke to the usual dull dawn at 6.30 but feeling relaxed, no stiff headache etc. Prepared my lecture, interrupted by an old woman in a shawl and headscarf who changed into Suri as he handed me my two teacups. I tried to order breakfast for 8.30 but he stared at my writing of 8.30 looking bewildered. I have now realized he is probably illiterate as well as half deaf. The fat grumpy man then appeared and accepted my order for puri masala at 8.30. Sure enough it arrived at 8.30. The puris [globular oily delicious batter things] were deflated and too oily and one had exploded and was just a mess of bits. The potato/pea/onion sweetish curry was delicious. I am a lucky boy.

*I am writing this at 11.00am.* I arrived for my 1<sup>st</sup> mol biol lecture at 9.30 to find only 4/40 students were there. As usual the students know more about what is happening than he does. I sent him off and chatted. Last night the biochemistry students told me there would be a strike today about hostels not providing mess facilities. My 4 students then told me that all the others had gone back to their home [their villages sir]. This is the story: some students had not paid their hostel mess fees; the hostels retaliate by not

providing food; it is expensive to eat out so they go home. They tell me they will all be back when the hostels start serving food next week [5<sup>th</sup>]. We had a nice chat then I went over to biochemistry and saw Appa rao, murthi and reddy. They said their 1<sup>st</sup> year students will be there tomorrow so I have told them I will bring their bioenergetics lectures forward starting tomorrow instead of next week. I will start micro mol biol on 5<sup>th</sup> but will tell sai gopal that I will give 90 min lectures to catch up.

Anyway I had a nice gentle morning dealing with john bolbot's comments on my review. It is remarkable how he remembers so much 30 years on. HE made some really good observations – mainly on some of Mary's muddle. To keep the review clean and easy I shall give up discussing it and just refer to her papers for further reading. After lunch I was scooted off to my final year lecture only to find the building locked cos of the strike. I gave up and called to fix my plan to lecture 1<sup>st</sup> year biochemists. Of course no one was there except as expected the head of department Thyagaraju who denounced the VC for stopping mess provision because 100 out of 4000 had not paid their mess bills. As I am told 3 or 4 times a day summer has come so it is intensely hot so I was pleased that one of the attendants from micro picked me up on his motorbike to get me home. After a bit more review while waiting for a student who had asked to come to get career advice. He didn't come so I went off at 4,30 for a walk up to the forest. After only 100 yards up the small road a tree pie landed in a tree beside me. It is a large magpie with lovely grey and tan coat. So at last I have a good picture of one of my favourite birds. Then had lovely walk, getting lost in the thorny forest where I saw a NEW bird. It was a bit bigger than a sparrow and was a beautiful blue all over; called a black-naped monarch. On the way past the NCC nagar 2 teenagers came up to chat and reminded me that I had taken their photos previously. I then remembered where I had seen them – at a little place on the edge of the forest where they were waiting for their buffalo milk; they were delighted. Staggering into the guest house Venu saw me and gave me a mini hug with huge smile offering me chai which he soon brought onto the roof where I enjoyed last 20 minutes of light. After an hour sorting my photos Edwin arrived to go to dinner but wanted to chat first as he wasn't hungry. He is very good gentle company. Again went to Kalyan where I had my first gobi Manchurian. Then home by auto at 10.0 at night through a declining town. *Now writing this while watching an interview with Alan Bennett.*

**Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> February.** *I am writing this at 6.00 in evening, feeling too tired to do anything else, having just returned from a bird stroll.* Slept well again last night but woke too early at 6.15 so got up and prepared my 1<sup>st</sup> biochemistry lecture on principles of bioenergetics. This was supposed to start at 9.30 but Sai gopal did not collect me until 9.35. Had a nice full lecture theatre with very happy enthusiastic students. Very enjoyable. Some 2<sup>nd</sup> year students include Edwin and Naik came in as well. *Kind Venu saw me come in to the guest house and bought a big glass of tea before going off duty.* Had chat with Edwin after the lecture and I think we made an arrangement for dinner but I cant remember what it was. As usual the biochemists do not offer a lift back but I did get called into an office on the way out to sit alone with a saucer with 3 biscuits on it and a thimble of welcome tea. It was strange weather today hot and breezy but a lot of cloud so relatively cool walk back. I did some preparation for tomorrow's lecture on the roof until interrupted by 2 1<sup>st</sup> years. One of them I had met with Subbu a few days ago. They kept asking if they are disturbing me which obviously they are and obviously I say no. Eventually I told them I had a lecture to prepare so off they went. I then remembered it is true as I had an afternoon lecture. This was on lysine biosynthesis and the start of Continuous culture lectures which I enjoy. All the students are back now cos they started serving food again. After my lecture Sai Gopal drove me back in his little air conditioned car. He then showed me a letter from Admin inviting me to be a visiting professor with an honorarium of 20,000 rupees. It is also said the university would provide accommodation and expenses but Sai Gopal said the 20.000 is instead of expenses. Obviously this is wrong and he is either a bit dumb or a bit devious. I think I will fight about it when I get my copy of the letter. Of course I do not really need it but I would rather have it to give to someone like Charlie for Stephen and Teena. After a bit more lecture preparation I went for a stroll up past NCC Nagar to see the blue bird of yesterday but of course I didn't see it or anything else really. It is rather humid so not so pleasant. On the way back I waved to a family in their garden and they called me over to chat. I have seen the house before with a neat garden with seat holding a nice old man and always a few calves and a cow and a few chickens. There was a teenage boy this time who was reading a book on English but he said he didn't speak English. His sister [or mother] chatted a bit and told me they are proud of their house – after I told them it was the nicest in the area [it is].

I had an email from Madhu saying he is not coming to India while I am here because he has now resigned and has to do one month notice. I replied and said I was sorry I would not see him in India again, meaning for a 2<sup>nd</sup> time he would not be here. So I got an instant worried reply "Chris don't say that; we must meet again etc." *I am doodling here unable to make plans for this evening. Sunil keeps sending messages or calling but I cannot hear him well. I thought he said that he was coming here later but when I said ok he said he will of course try his best etc. So perhaps I will go early to Sindhuri park for dinner alone then come back and watch a film then he can come if he wants.*

Had a nice email from libby about her trip to the brothers. I miss her and hugh and home.

I went early to sinduri park, catching an auto immediately so avoiding the long unlit part of the road to town. It is quite dangerous as I have to walk in the road. The high pavement cant be used in the dark as it has huge holes and also wires to trees etc for falling over. I still really enjoy the ride through town in the evening. As it was before 7.30 there was only the snack menu so I had really good thai veggie noodles followed by strarberry ice cream. I wanted to have pista nut but couldn't remember the name of the nut [pistachio]. I then walked happy down through the temple into Gandhi road and then took photos down the garland road including a video of a boy doing the last part of making the garland when they wrap very fine thread around it like a spiders web. They are so friendly there and call me over to chat. One nice bearded muslim man wanted me to take a photo of his son and then of the little stall opposite where his older son was sitting. I walked all the way back to the far side of Balaji colony and wandered into the music college where there was the sound of loud plangent wailing oboes and drums. I found two boys sitting on the ground almost in the dark playing long oboes with a bell at the end resting on the ground. They were playing different things but they sort of blended. I had thought of calling in to the hostel but felt too tired so got an auto home where I have just finished watching a DVD of beautiful Hale Berry in Monsters Ball. Very good but a bit graphic for Libby. Madhu phoned to say sorry he is not coming. He has not decided yet whether to get another job in Dubai or to stay in India. It is a shame that he is coming here about 10 days after I leave. Then Edwin phoned to apologise for letting his phone run out of charge so he couldn't answer my call. Then Imran. Then Moin. Then Vinay who has just started his 2<sup>nd</sup> semester calling to ask what weight I can carry home cos his father wants to come and give me stuff for him. As I was full weight coming it was difficult to answer. It will be sweets mainly so I said a few Kg – I can take them out and give them to counter staff at the airport if they weigh too much. My big comfy bed now beckons. Good night.

**Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> February.** *I am starting to write this to pass the time till dinner. I think I will do the same as yesterday and go down to sinduri park alone and peaceful.*

I woke too early again but it is now warm even before the sun is up so I went for a bird stroll in my new forest area where I saw the monarch. It is so positive to walk out into the morning sun. There were large numbers of red vented bulbuls [the dull ones] singing in competition with themselves and with the magpie robins and Indian robins. Saw nothing special but still enjoyable to be out as the world wakes up. Had good breakfast of idlis and wada. I should have been collected by Sai Gopal at 9.20 but after phoning him he sent Raju on his bike to collect me at 9.40 so I was about 20 minutes late for my biochemistry lecture. They are very good fun and set up a continuous laugh as I struggled with their names on the register. I lectured for 1 hour 20 minutes with their permission [please continue sir we are all happy]. Had a little chat with Edwin then got a student to drive me back to the guest house. I washed my hair and sat in the sun correcting my review; it is amazing how much it can be improved after a few days of resting it. After lunch Raju was again 20 minutes late. Had good continuous culture lecture, this time with a nearly full house including 5 men now. I then had my obligatory tea with Sai Gopal who gave me a copy of the invitation letter. I took it to Thayagaraju [head of biochemistry] to ask him to interpret. I am glad to say it was me who had misunderstood. They use the word Faculty to refer to a person. So 'the faculty pays daily expenses' means me – not faculty of science. I was met outside biochemistry by a few 2<sup>nd</sup> year students I knew, one of whom [Hanuma Kumar] drove me back to sit on the guest house roof for an hour of wise advice. His father wants him to go to US for PhD, or UK. I explained this is almost impossible and that he should get a PhD before travelling. His father started life in a beggar family and wants his son to get on and to visit places he himself was unable to go to. He is a good student but a bit sad as he feels he cannot do what his father wants. After he left I tried to finish washing shirts etc and found there was no water. It came on later for me to do a bit of pounding on the bathroom floor and stamping in the bucket, an excellent technique. I tried to do some

more preparation of electron transport etc and found that the older edition of Stryer that Edwin lent to me is seriously wrong in some places. I wish I had more lectures with them.

*I have just overcome the temptation to have a dinner of crisps and bananas, remembering that I have always been pleased when I have decided to go out; I shall probably go to the hostels afterwards..*

I have just returned from dinner and hostels. I went to 1<sup>st</sup> year biochemists. They were so excited and phoned their friends to come and see what has come to pass. They are in the same room as usual so the big room has so many ghosts from the past. One of them had 2 budgies in a cage who sang all evening. They are so easy to please; I guess they treat me as cheap entertainment.

**Friday 4<sup>th</sup> February.** I woke as usual at 6,30 but rebelled and slept again until 7.10. Decided against a walk as I had my difficult 1<sup>st</sup> year biochemistry lectures to prepare. To get me in a positive mood I cleaned my razor and swept the floor. This was partly stimulated by the sight and sound of cockroach under my bed. Fortunately he had parked on the broom so he was dispatched off the roof. Idlis and wada. Sai Gopal arrived on time so I was able to start my lecture at exactly 9,30. Actually 9.35 as I have long register to check first; they always enjoy my corruptions of their names. I did Mitchell's stuff which is always fun to teach with plenty of little stories. Edwin and other 2<sup>nd</sup> years always come and sit at the back to eavesdrop. He came running down the corridor afterwards to apologise for not turning up last night. He had to stay in lab late. Asked if he could come tonight. The first year boy with a bike gave me a lift home so I could sit on roof and prepare lectures. There was a lot of high cloud but it was still very hot but with a nice breeze. After lunch and sleep Sai gopal turned up to tell me the students have not come as there is a strike. So I spent the afternoon doing corrections and improvements to my review. At 5,00 it was cool enough to walk so I set out directly opposite the guest house towards NCC Nagar. At my favourite house with the cow and calves the old man in his garden called me over then a younger one invited me into garden where others in a big extended family joined us. The boy [18yrs student] got me a chair then stood politely while I chatted with his brother/uncle/cousin. Then coffee was produced. Then of course photos. So my walk was no more than 400 metres. Then finished preparing my final lecture for 1<sup>st</sup> year biochemists while waiting for Edwin who came on time at 8.00 to get an auto down to Sindhuri Park for nice dinner of butter naan with their special subji [veggies dish]. This was voted only 6/10 by Edwin who would prefer much more chilli. I loved it. He made up for his disappointment by having a huge fruit salad with icecream and I had Pista green ice cream again. The restaurant was packed with very noisy people, the worst being a big fat hairy priest looking man who shouted into his mobile most of the evening. We came back through cold night driven by a manic auto driver with a duck quack hooter down Nethaji road. I suggested that Edwin should return with the auto back to the hostel but he kindly remained for a nice chat. He is having problems with his project which happens to be growth of plants in tissue culture so I called Moin who is now an expert on this and I think he has solved the problem. I am feeling twitchy so will go to bed. Goodnight.

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> February.** When I woke at 7.00 the hills were completely hidden in mist, promising or threatening a hot day. On principle I set out for a walk up to NCC nagar and very soon the mist cleared. Almost as soon as I got inside the campus I got a good picture of a mynah sitting on a wall; although they are common they are easily alarmed so it is not easy to get near them. As I passed my new friends [boy is called Lokesh] he and granddad were sitting reading the paper on their stone bench, both wearing woolen hats, the old man also wrapped in a shawl and Lokesh wearing jeans sawn off at the calf. The old man jumped up to say Namaste and the boy gave a huge grin with an energetic wave of his paper. Their house always sends out waves of goodwill. A bit further up the road I got one of the best pictures ever of my favourite chestnut and black crow pheasant or coucal. The record did not last long because 40 minutes later I got really perfect close up picture. This morning was the turn of the red vented bulbuls [the duller sort] to fill the morning with their rather private gurgling song. Most of the usual birds but no orioles or hoopoes. Back to a nice breakfast of idlis and wada – always excellent when I am feeling hungry.

Sai gopal was late again but quite forgivable as he had been driving errands since 7.30. I gave my last lecture to the Previous biochemists, on proton pumping, Mitchell and the Q cycle. When I told them it was the last lecture there was a nice call from one of the boys We want more; when I asked if it was only him who wanted more they all joined in. So I told them to arrange a couple of formal lectures for next week. When I was about to go out the door waving goodbye they all stood up as usual but this time waving, with the girls calling goodbye sir, goodbye sir ..... They certainly make me feel wanted. New discovery: the blue

and white cleaning cloths when used dry are excellent at removing chalk dust from my hands. Had a nice chat with Edwin after lecture – he should have been coming with me to Charlie’s for dinner tomorrow but he has a cricket match [Charlie later postponed dinner to Monday night]. My usual 1<sup>st</sup> year drove me back to spend an hour re-formatting my review. Surya’s father phoned to invite me to visit, then modified it to an invitation for him to come here at 4.00.

For some reason there was only chapatti and curry and curds, they had no vegetables. At my afternoon lecture about one third of the girls did not turn up but the boys have now increased to 7. So frustrating. I set them a few small problems in continuous culture and explained how to set about them. Then I asked if they would do it; silence. So I asked individuals ‘No sir, no sir, I will try sir, no sir’. Some of them are good probably. After my tea with Sai Gopal I saw a second year student, thin Bala Ankaiah peering down a microscope at a Gram stain. I bravely accepted and declared it was Gram positive Bacillus sp. I was right; genius. Then I had to wait while a copy of my reply, concocted by SG to the VC accepting my position of UGC visiting professor; full of phrases like “I trust you to do the needful”. So I signed in the hope that I will get my 20,000 honorarium. This is enough to pay my food and hotel bill, but I might leave some with Charlie or Moin. Venkatesh then drove me back to guest house for 4.0 where I finished off some review corrections. Then tea on the roof until Surya’s father arrived – at 5.00. He had objected to the cost of auto and walked from Renigunta to the bus stand in Tirupati then got an auto. He then informed me that we were now going to dinner at his house in Renigunta. Fortunately I had no other arrangement and although I did not really want to go there is an element of duty about it so I went. We went by an unusually fast auto which we shared as far as the bus station opposite Fortune Kences hotel. It was very busy road and hot and dusty and I was sandwiched between Venkateswara Rao and a very fat man. Altogether unpleasant. It was better once we got out past Bliss hotel but then approaching Renigunta there were big roadworks where they are building huge flyovers parallel with the present road. Their house is more spacious than previous with a comfortable kitchen and a shared courtyard with a papaya and a fig tree. We had the usual problem that I can hardly hear him and then I cant understand and Surya’s mum cackles happily in the background. Surya never says anything when he phones so they are desperate for new which I gave them. Had nice simple supper of puris and potato curry washed down with Limca. Fortunately neighbours came in and the son spoke English. I was soon wanting to leave but we had to wait 5 minutes to see his boss who came after 10 minutes and stayed 20, to eat some dinner. Hough phoned during dinner to say that his Oxford trip was cancelled and that he was planning to spend the afternoon erecting his bookcase with Martin. After a few pictures we walked through the nice quiet area to the main road to catch my bus home. After 10 minutes it arrive but our entrance was blocked briefly by a passing bullock cart which VR hit with irritation to clear the way for me. I scrambled on while VR yelled at the conductor “SVU guest house”. The bus was better to write about than to experience. It was the usual ‘town bus’ which ploughs through everything with its horn yelping. It has few windows, having window holes that are barred. The fare was 5 rupees. Although it was 8.00 in evening the traffic was heavy especially near Tirupati. Instead of going direct through the town and out the other side to University the bus drove into the vast bus station and parked parallel with about 20 other buses and everyone got out including the driver and conductor. I guess it would soon have set off again but I decided not to wait so joined the crowds, eventually finding an auto to pay 50 rupees to get me home. By then I was getting anxious from the big cups of tea I had and the coffee and the 2 limcas so did not enjoy the jostling and jerking about as we wove in and out of the traffic down Nethaji road and Prakasam road. Anyway here we are. I soon settled down with the computer with a possible plan to watch a film after this, with a lump of milk chocolate and a nice chat with Moin who was lying on his bed with a headache; “no problem sir I have taken an inhibitor of prostaglandin biosynthesis”, an instant morale booster.

I shall watch a film *The Human stain*. Seems suitable as I am feeling stained.

**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> February.** The film was very good; it had to be with Anthony Hopkins and Nicole Kidman. I had a very disturbed night with the dogs howling continuously. Desperate, at 2.30 I grabbed my torch and rushed out in my boxers and bare feet to try to drive them away. They were down in the courtyard and just howled louder. Then, a stroke of sheer genius; I got my powerful green laser and zapped them with that. They howled and ran off to another part of the guest house so I went rushing off after them. They gave in and ran off down the road. I must have looked like a demented Luke Skywalker with light sabre. *I am writing this while watching Alan Bennet’s The Outing*. I had planned to go to lunch at Charlie’s, taking Edwin

who Teena is keen to play with again. But he now has a cricket match so we are going tomorrow instead. I then realized that I had no plans for anything on a whole Sunday. I had my usual idlis and wada at 9.00 then went for a stroll round the local houses where I saw the woodpecker at what might have been its hole. Saw nothing but nice start to the day. I spent all morning sitting reading the Sunday Hindu on the roof and sorting out pictures and doing some photoshops of my bird pictures. The Mynahs and tree pies and coucal are excellent. I needed some soap and newspaper and small batteries for my nice little loudspeakers so I phoned a 1<sup>st</sup> year student with a bike [Hemanth Naik] and he came and took my order and off he went. My lunch then appeared, the worst ever. No veggies, only yellow gunge and 2 large chapattis which were dry and almost crisp. Saved by a little poly bag of commercial curds which I had in a bowl with loads of sugar. Hemanth then appeared with a friend and my bits and pieces. I then felt a bit sorry for myself as no one was answering phones [Subbu or Sunil or Edwin] so I had a read of the wonderful John Irving and had a long sleep. After a bit more photoshop I decided I would walk past Thumulagunta to Purapalle so set off in the hot sun at about 4.15 over the level crossing and through the dairy farm. I immediately felt better. The crossing was closed but I ducked under and crossed; this was slightly odd cos I looked back and realized I had done that without noticing. I assume I checked that the train was not coming. Just after I went out into the open part of the farm a gang of young teenagers with father and uncle came towards me shouting that the camels had tried to kick them. The two camels were further off by the pond. The boys wanted to see my camera then wanted me to take photo while they used their mobiles – and one had a real camera which the uncle used to take picture of me with the boys, all very excited that they had been kicked by a camel and been chatted to by a man from UK. Just as we were about to disperse there was a frightened shout and one of the camels was hurtling towards us on the narrow track. I jumped sideways out of its path but the boys went dashing screaming down the path and jumping over a fence; all a bit Lawrence of Arania-ish. As I went down the path past Thumulagunta one of my special friends (Barath Kumar) saw me, rushed up to shake hands then stood trapped by uncertainty. He was obviously on an errand, carrying a little packet of curd. So he made me promise to stay where I was which provoked a big hug; he then ran down the path to deliver his errand. He then returned and took me to Balajii's house. I had felt that they would be bored if I went too often. I had already been twice. But I felt more welcome than ever. Some play with binoculars while others chivvy their friends into groups for photos. We went up on the roof to enjoy the evening breeze and to take pictures lit by the sinking golden sun. Barath (age 9) is charmingly possessive while Mounish (13) claims to be my best friend. Ajay (14) looks very intelligent and is very good at guessing what I want and organizing the younger ones. Small Bobby (9) seems to be everyone's favourite with a huge smile and enormous eyelashes. When it is time to leave I set out in the usual way with Barath holding one hand while the others compete for the other. When I pause they coagulate holding onto whatever is available. We had many diversions for photos of fathers and uncles and brothers on the way out of the village. Just as I thought we were clear Mounish saw a relation with a young baby "come to baby sir –photo". They all took this up as a chant "Come to baby. Come to baby". So we came and more photos. I stopped them all at the main road and promised to come again soon before running across the main road, through the hole in the farm wall and a peaceful stroll back in the growing breeze to the guest house. I checked my emails and found I had one from Suresh [Surya's brother]. He had phoned while I was at his parents yesterday. There was a long attached letter asking for help with Surya. He rarely phones home and never tells them anything. They are worried that he is not happy. But also worried that he is not planning to look after his father. Suresh thinks he should stop wasting his time in uk. He says that if he cannot get a job in india there is no problem as his father will look after him. He says their friends sons send a lot of money home to look after their families etc etc. He explained that his father has not been good with money and so only has his railway pension etc. I do not know what he expects me to do. *While writing this Surya phoned so I told him that his parents tell me that they do not know if he is happy and perhaps he should tell them more. He says he will do this but that he phones regularly and is always 10 minutes chatting. Surya phone: 07584323948.*

Auto down to Gandhi Road, walk to Sinduri park, Kaju gopi with butter rotis followed by butterscotch ice cream [wonderful]. Walked to the station and auto home. *It is now only 10.30 but I am tired and very twitchy. So to bed. Hanuman has just sent text message wishing me good night.*

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> February.** *I am writing this while waiting for Edwin to come with an auto to go to dinner with Charlie.* I slept badly last night, waking with stiff neck and headache. [Why do I tell this?]. A strange day of good and bad. My headache disappeared as I walked my usual NCC Nagar walk, briskly at first to keep

warm until the sun was a little higher when it soon became very hot. Yesterday there were so many birds but today very few. It is still a nice walk. I returned for my [ordered] 8.30 breakfast which did not come until 9.10 so I had to gobble it up too quickly as Sai Gopal was arriving at 9.15. He arrived on time and then told the staff to please get food on time and to get good food, not like yesterday's lunch. There is a different man getting it. They were asked to be sure to get my lunch by 12.30 [more later]. I gave my first molecular biology lecture to Previous year. My first lecture to them. A full lecture theatre [room] of really enthusiastic responsive students. I wish we had started earlier so I could get to know them better. Before morning tea I went into biochemistry to find Edwin but was told he had not come today. And he does not answer his phone. At the guest house I successfully updated my CSO webpage and even got it up onto internet. I went down at 12.30 to remind them about lunch and found a full scale preparation for a big buffet lunch. All the food was there so all that was needed was for them to put some on a plate and bring to my room but they said wait 5 minutes. 25 minutes later the place was packed and they said I should get in the line which would have meant another 15 minutes wait. So I turned on a bit of aggression and said no – we arranged you would bring to my room 30 minutes ago so please bring it: ok sir 5 minutes. Sai Gopal was due to pick me up at 1.45 so I went down again at 1.30 to find the place much less busy but was greeted by the VC like a long lost friend and had to chat for 5 minutes before he took me by the arm and led me to be introduced to an important guest sitting at a table. He was the Chief Minister for Education in Andhra Pradesh. So another 5 minute chat before I was allowed to grab 2 chapattis and some veg and have a very rapid lunch. As I tried to leave I was chased by 3 staff down the hall, all looking a bit guilty, to try to get me to accept some fruit salad. Cutting my nose off to spite my face, I said No, I told you I need early lunch as I have a lecture. Sai Gopal appeared at that moment to drag me hungry away. I arrived at the lecture room to be met outside by all the girls; it was locked. I said that I would go and get the key; “no sir that is not your function sir, the assistants have that duty”. One of the girls then went and collected it. I struggled in the hot room to put some life into methanogenesis but it was difficult.

I wandered over to Biochemistry and found most of the staff in Thyagaraju's office and we arranged that I give a formal lecture on Thursday morning at 11.00. Hanuman then saw me and went off to find Edwin. I had been using his old number [idiot]. So confirmed this evening is ok. *[still waiting for him to arrive]*. Raju then gave me a lift back to guest house where I had tea and a read in the setting sun. Feeling a bit tired I went for a wander up the road towards NCC Nagar and was lured into Lokesh's garden to help his sister with some English translation. It is nice to sit in the cool evening drinking coffee with the crows going home to roost and the 2 cows having a mooing competition. Please come again tomorrow sir. I probably will. I had replied to Suresh's email about Surya just repeating that he was happy and that he was not 'wasting his time there in UK'. Received an instant response to this thanking me and inviting me to visit him in Combatoire [Tamil Nadu I think]. “It is only 8 hours journey sir”. No.

At last Edwin arrived, 40 minutes late and very apologetic. I then felt guilty because I had been silently irritated with him because he had been hit by a nasty spinning cricket ball a bit earlier and his hand was very swollen. Fortunately it died down during the evening. We had the usual problem with an auto as they do not understand addresses. I phoned Charlie and he gave directions and then met us near his house. Teena looked very happy to see Edwin who immediately started his romance where he left off last year; this time with a little drawing competition. Stephen sat straight backed and nervous while I struggled like a typical adult asking about school etc. I always carry the little camera in my bag so I gave it to Stephen and asked him to photograph his house for me. He only took photos of the one room, mainly of all the ornaments. He looked so pleased with himself; good plan. We had a great dinner of fried chicken with noodles and then other chicken with spinach with puris. Of course I was made to eat too much while Charlie's wife rused back and forth serving fresh inflated puris. All served with cold coca cola. Charlie then demonstrated how he makes his recordings with a huge computer programme and his electronic keyboard. He played something that he has written with a famous movie singer; very impressive. We then walked with the children through the nice quiet back streets to a bigger road to get our auto back home. Edwin stopped in Balaji colony “to get a tablet sir” for his hand. Tablets are popular for anything and easy to find a pharmacist to provide them. He had had a hard time eating with his bad hand at dinner. He asked if I wanted him to come back to the guest house but I sacrificed my wishes as he had said he is so tired and so dropped him at first gate to go home to his hostel. I didn't want to go to bed too early so am writing this at

10.45. I am feeling nervous that I am near the end of my book by John Irving [Son of the Circus] but I still have the Hilary Mantel so I should be ok.

**Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> February.** I woke very early so started to read towards the end of my novel. Then couldn't stop and read on to the end, interrupted by two-teas-sury and then by 8.30 breakfast. It is really hot by 8.30. Had my 2<sup>nd</sup> lecture with 1<sup>st</sup> years. As we have to catch up on missed time I am going faster than last year but they are coping alright. While in the middle of a joky story I saw that the prof of botany had slipped into the back [I think he is called Sudarshan]. He is the father of the 10 year old saintly boy who horrified me years ago. The boy is now a final year medical student. I somehow agreed to give a lecture to the botany students on Friday and to go to dinner with sudarshan who live very close. My hot water system stopped working so I asked the steward [big limping Naidu] if anything could be done. I think my public demonstration of friendship with the VC and Chief Education Minister yesterday has had some impact. Within 10 minutes 2 electricians arrived and found the fault was in a little muddle of wires high up on the ceiling in the main room. So I helped build a scaffold from my 2 tables plus a chair and 10 minutes later all was mended. In revenge for complaining that they did not get me my early lunch yesterday they bought [excellent] lunch at 11.45. Afterwards I had a shower then dried out in the hot sun for 20 minutes before having a 30 minute nap. My industrial microbiology lecture on antibiotic production was so dull. After the lecture called in to give my lecture title to Thyagaraju for Thursday and was crashed into by Edwin flying down the stairs to tell me his hand is ok etc. we were joined by his two main friends; they are so happy to come and chat they always raise my morale. After departmental tea Sai Gopal drove me back so I could get on with preparing my lectures. After 20 minutes reading in the setting sun I went up to my new friendly family to collect Lokesh to bring him back to the guest house to show pics of family and home. At 6.45 Hanuman Kumar arrived. He is 2<sup>nd</sup> year biochemist who has been pestering me with text messages and wanting advice etc. So when he had last phoned I was generous and invited him to dinner. He then drove me on his big 220cc motorbike down to town. A bad driver, having difficulty changing gears smoothly and jerking along. It was so unnerving as he just missed pedestrians [there is little that is pedestrian about Indian pedestrians] and actually hit an auto a glancing blow. I invented an errand in Gandhi Road and got him to park his bike and walk with me. I went to Gogula stores to see if they sold table cloths; no but they recommended a good place near them.

In Sundhri Park we had butter rotis and kaju, mushrooms etc followed by icecream. During the meal Hanuman's aggressive father phoned and wanted to talk to me. He is very strict and never let his son have friends when a school boy so he tells me he does not know how to deal with people. He is certainly a bit odd. I said very little to the father cos I could not really understand what he was saying. He then texted me with a whole load of questions. Not good in the middle of dinner. Hanuman then tried to make me wait in the hotel foyer while he went and got his bike. I had to show a sort of anger to get him to shut up and come with me in an auto to where his bike was parked and we had another fight while I refused to get out and let him drive me home. He then wanted to come to GH and tried to get me to say where I was going. I had to be a bit abrupt and drove off quickly to the first gate to go to block b to do a duty visit to micro1. The driver remembered me from the other night and then tried to persuade me I should get him a cleaning job in UK, hurtling down Nethaji road at the same time. I got the story of his life and education on the way to first gate. Before I got to the entrance I was seen by a biochemistry 1 student who dragged me by the hand up the stairs to room 57 which was soon filled with a dozen microbiologists. As usual they sat on the bed staring and asking questions "tell about madam, what hobbies, what about sri venkateswara sir", and on and on. Then loads of photos. In the middle of some silly story I realized that some of the boys were using their phones to video me. After 40 minutes I phoned Edwin who turned up with Naik and ?? to drag me away; they had just returned from the lab doing their projects and were on the way to Balaji colony for food. All the other students had come out of the building to wave goodbye. Libby phoned in the middle of all this so I got her to call me back later. When an auto drove up I told Edwin and friends to use it to go and get food but he cleverly beat me by stuffing 20 rupees into the shirt pocket of the driver telling him to take me to the guest house.

I had an email from Suresh in response to my letter in response to his. Apparently I did something right because he said his parents are now much happier from what I said and also because Surya had phoned immediately after I had phoned him and had a long chat with his father. Perhaps that is why his father has

not phoned to arrange dinner tomorrow. I have been struggling to think how to avoid that and my acceptance of a dinner invitation from Sudarshan was partly to have a prior engagement.

*I am nearly falling asleep so I better stop.*

Goodnight all.

**Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> February.** *I am writing this in early evening while waiting for the Botany professor to collect me for dinner. He has invited me so often in the past I finally gave in and also agreed to give a lecture in his Department on Friday.*

Had a good night but still woke too early. This was made nicer by Venu bringing me a big glass of tea at 7.00. I went for usual stroll walk. It has usually mean a bit misty in mornings but today was so clear that the hills seemed almost oppressive. Behind the pig place I was stopped by crowds of birds. Red whiskered bulbuls in bunches and rufous bellied babblers babbling and scuttling about always just out of sight. The Indian robins were out in force. I got a nice picture of the brain-fever bird with a sufficiently clear beak to distinguish it from the shikra hawk. As I passed Lokesh's house on the way home there was a shout and there he was holding a baby on the roof. Lokanard brought my breakfast, proudly putting a steel plate with banana leaf on it with usual steel bowl of red chilli/tomato/onion soup and idlis and 2 wadas. All very good. Sai Gopal is getting worried that we will not finish the syllabus before the exams as a month was lost. So I went faster than usual and covered the whole of the mechanism of protein synthesis in 70 minutes. This was only possible because this group of students seems brighter than usual. I commented that one student was not writing down any of my words of wisdom. Like Edwin he had been damaged by a cricket ball. *Now listening to Liszts piano sonata; wonderful.* After a fast bike drive back I finished some clothes washing as it is such a good drying day (I sound like my mum); that is there was a nice breeze and temperature on the roof is 30 deg in shade. No lunch had appeared by 12.50 so I went down and collected a plate chappatis and veggies. Lokanard then brought up another plate with a bowl of rice and dal [good] and another of rather watery curds. I had a slightly less dull final year lecture – on streptomycin synthesis and vitamin production. I will give my last of these tomorrow I am glad to say. At tea I was presented with a green paper scroll tied up with purple ribbon carrying an invitation to attend a function in a big hotel. The 1<sup>st</sup> year students from a microbiology department in another local college are giving their final year students a farewell function. I hope I don't have to give an inspiring lecture. I walked back through very hot afternoon sun to guest house where I prepared tomorrows Biochemistry lecture and have just finished preparing Friday's Botany department lecture. My internet connection did not work this morning and I wasted some time trying to solve it. Then I did the obvious and called Moin who remembered that the first month is free then it must be 'charged' by paying. I had already given him the money to do this but he forgot that the first month was finished. That is good as it means that I will have it back tomorrow. It is only when it is absent that I realize how useful it is. The botany professor has just arrived 15 minutes early; miracle. He lives in the road directly opposite the guest house that leads to NCC Nagar where Lokesh and family live. His wife said the she sees me every day walking there. I was relieved to find there were comfortable arm chairs instead of the usual flat benches with the odd cushion or bolster. Their son is waiting for the results of his medicine finals. They are a very modern equipped family with flat screen TV, WiFi etc. The son wanted a photo and took out a Nikon D90 like Clive's digital SLR. I felt like a model as he crept about taken pictures from all angles. Dinner was excellent but of course I worried them by eating only a fraction of what I was offered. We had chicken curry with cashew nuts (very spicy) and tandoori chicken. I abstained from rice but I ate more than I wanted to and then had to eat two crepes with honey. They are all very nice and the professor is genuinely interested and interesting. He is an expert website maker, preparing them for all sorts of conference etc. Not so good is his enthusiasm for video conferencing. My lecture on Friday will be available in real time to anyone who signs up – usually people in US and Taiwan. Will they really want to see pictures of me at 8 years old? Or playing cello. *I am writing this now while listening to Liszts sonata on my earphones; I should do this more as the quality is so good. Keep falling asleep so I better give up and crawl into bed. Good night*

**Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> February.** Had a good night but woke at 6.30. Got up to prepare my special biochemistry lecture; I need not have bothered as will be obvious. I especially wanted to include lots of early Tirupati pictures. Usual nice breakfast but felt unnecessarily nervous about lecture. In my 9.30 lecture I started on Transcription which is difficult but the students seem to follow ok. At 10.30 I rushed my memory stick with lecture on over to biochemistry so they can set up everything for my lecture then went for my obligatory

tea in virology. When I returned for my lecture at 11.00 all the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students were there but they had problems that lasted 20 minutes setting up the laptop and projector. So I had to tell a few funny stories to entertain the troops. Then the projector had a fault so all slides had poor colour and definition. No red lettering showed at all. All my important conclusions and summaries were in red. Anyway it seemed to be appreciated. I was then presented with a nice Kashmiri shawl and a box which I opened later. It is a large picture frame containing a 3D representation of Jesus. Probably Jesse will prefer it to Venkateswara. Edwin later asked if I liked my present and I asked if he had chosen it and he shyly [sheepish and shyly] said yes, so of course I liked it very much. The students all wanted to gather round and chat at the end but I had been told I must get to Virology by 12.30 to go to lunch with Chowdappa. Stupidly I therefore rushed away and then stood around for 30 minutes waiting for him to arrive. Eventually we all drove off to the Bliss hotel for lunch where I was force fed spicy chicken. Then immediately back for me to give my last lecture to final years on production of fructose syrup and xanthan gum. Then more waiting around to be driven back to the guest house by chowdappa [he has a driver] to be presented with 2 boxes of grapes. Desperate to collapse on my bed, as he left 2 1<sup>st</sup> year biochemists arrived. Fortunately they were two of the best of the bunch, Shabeer who is clever but has poor English and keeps saying you are so handsome sir; and Santosh Krishna Rao who is intelligent and chats well. "Shabeer is my best friend sir but I think I may be losing him to you". I showed them my lecture pictures as they should be before going out onto the roof for photos. They left just in time for me to sit and read some Wolf Hall. I see why Libby liked it so much; it is good in every way. I then had a phone call from Edwin about our evening arrangement. I had said to bring his friends if he wants. He wanted to know did I really want that; "whatever you like Edwin; no sir you must say; I am happy whatever you want. I told him the advantage of his friends coming would be that he wouldn't be bored by me. No sir not like that but they are excited to be with you. So they came. Both very quiet but that was nice. They got animated on the subject of enzyme purification [who wouldn't?]. I dropped them all off at hostels and came home for a peaceful quiet diary time.

**Friday 11<sup>th</sup> February.** As I did not sleep till after midnight I did not wake until 6.45. Again I did not go out because I had a formal lecture in Botany Department and wanted to include some new slides. Sai Gopal and Chowdappa arrived at 8.00 to take me to breakfast just as my idlis arrived. I said I must finish preparation so they went off for breakfast somewhere and came back to take me to my 1st year lecture on splicing and exons which was nice to do. After lecture I was driven by Chowdappa to the Botany Department where I gave a lecture. All a bit strange as I had not taught those students and they seemed to know very little basic microbiology or biochemistry. They liked the family pictures and pics of old Tirupati. The Department Head prof Sudarsanam had fixed it up for an international webcast so there were people plugged into it from all over world. All a bit odd. And he had some minion with his Nikon D90 wandering round flashing pics all through the conference. Quite enjoyable. I was given a little clock as a present at the end. We then had to wander round the department with Chowdappa and Sai gopal being sentimental about when they were students when I 1<sup>st</sup> visited in 1982. The main difference is that it is all clean. I had a bit of my funny migraine starting so did not enjoy lunch although it was in a useful new restaurant called Sizzlers just past Balaji colony. We had very spicy chicken so I was using up all the table paper napkins blowing my nose, with a nice waiter replenishing them during the meal. It is 'international' with many Chinese dishes [mainly spicy Sezchwan]. The three of them chattered away in Telugu while I sat saying Charlu, enough, every few minutes. Chowdappa then drove back to the guest house with SaiGopal on his way back to Bangalore. They then made plans for my last day in Chennai. Moin is desperate that Chowdappa does not spoil his last afternoon with me. I think it will be ok. Chowdappa is returning from the Andaman islands on the Monday we go to Chennai. His plane arrives at 10.30 so he will come to Trident for lunch then return for his flight to Bangalore which is at 4.00. He and Sai Gopal are arranging our car to be better than kalyan - new and with AC. I was then presented with a laptop to bring back for Vinay plus grapes, which I have a week to eat. Then a serious speech about how he must carry out his obligations and do as arranged and pay £400 for my airfare. I said it was unnecessarily generous as I did not go to Bangalore. His wife insisted he says. But he wont give me it now as Sai Gopal told him I would only give it away to my friends here. In this case not true except for one thing. I am not sure if I can take out more currency than I brought in. That is ok as that is what I brought in [to pay for golden sun food transport etc]. But the UGC are paying me 20,000 [£300ish] and biochemistry is paying some more. I am sure I will solve what is after all a nice problem.

Sai Gopal had, on my behalf, accepted an invitation to attend a function this evening at some big hotel, as special guest at a Microbiology department function of a private university here. After 2 big lectures I did not want to go but I then realised that my migraine could be useful so I was let off. It has stopped now [7.00 in evening] so I feel a bit inhibited about going out. Perhaps I will graze on biscuits and grapes and a bottle of BA wine and watch a film. After C and SG left I slept for more than an hour then sat groggy on the roof reading Wolf Hall with the tall Eucalyptus and Ashoka trees swaying in beautiful late afternoon breeze. I wandered up NCC road to enjoy the setting sun and dropped in on Lokesh's family. He said the cow did not have a name but his young auntie said she is Lakshmi. She [auntie] was sitting with Grandmother making jasmine hair decorations, tying complicated arrangements of tiny sweet smelling petals into chains. Others wandered around to say hello and why have you not come to us for 2 days? It is quite tiring because their English is poor but it is so peaceful sitting in the garden with the calves and marigolds drinking my little teacup of sweet milky coffee it is worth it. When I got back Venu was outside waiting to show me his bike 150 cc Hero Honda on which he will drive 35km home tonight. His English is better than I thought, probably cos he was off duty and so could chat freely. He is 28 and lives with his family and is not married and likes his rather menial job in the guest house. I said that he always looks happy and he says that he is happy. *I am struggling to decide what to do – go for food- or call in hostel or call someone to come and visit or sit it out here.*

I decided to settle down here and had dinner of grapes and Walkers shortbread followed by Christmas cake while watching Colin Frith in A single Man. Good dinner good entertainment.

**Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> February.** *I am writing this while waiting for Edwin to collect me for dinner; so far only 25 minutes late. He has just phoned to say that a friend from another town has turned up so he cant come. So I better get down town to eat.*

Had a good night's sleep so got up energetically and set off for my usual walk. This morning was bulbul day – both sorts everywhere. Got my best pictures ever of purple sunbird which must be in the sun to see its iridescent feathers. Was hungry after last night's semi-fast so idlis and wada though cold were good. I have failed to get hold of Sunil who is keen to visit but his phone doesn't seem to link to mine. Had no plans so at about 10.0 walked in the sun down to toward the hostels. Fortunately I met Subbu near the Zoology Department; he is going back to Cuppam tonight so we arranged for him to come at 4 for tea. He suddenly remembered that Subbaiah was in the building so I went in and surprised him. He did his usual thing of rushing up and hugging me like a little boy. He is the small student who looks a bit like Charlie chaplin with huge eyelashes; he was the one they gave me as a present one year to take home with me [he is so devoted to you sir]. He had had typhoid fever earlier in the year so was looking thinner than I remembered him. He was enthusiastic to show me the papers he has published. I walked to the hostels where the biochemists were playing cricket in the courtyard of C block. The game stopped as they all came over. After arranging for Edwin to come to dinner tonight they carried on with E bowling. *[I am listening to Mozart's Cosi on my ipod while writing this]*. One reason for going to C block was to see Bala Ankaya but they pointed out that the doors of the microbiologists were all closed cos they had gone to do their projects. So I walked up to the Department in the hot sun, and sure enough Sarath and Bala were there. Had a nice chat and Sarath drove me home on his bike, coming in for grapes and advice on enzyme assays; he is doing a project on keratinase. After he had gone I sorted my room out and swept the floor, putting away all my finished lectures. Lunch was usual chapattis and 2 unidentifiable 'dry items'. It was too hot to do anything so I slept for an hour then had a shower and drying read on the roof. Subbu then arrived with a student from his Cuppam department to have tea on the roof, with the sun shining through the leaves and the cool wind blowing the eucalyptus around. After they left I went for short evening walk up near the small pond on the north edge of the campus and saw a new bird – a white breasted water hen, like a more interesting moorhen. Also saw close up two male koils, the big black cuckoos; they were doing some sort of display thing hidden in a bush; it didn't seem to be very aggressive but was friendly; perhaps the first observation of gay cuckoos. I started writing this while waiting for Edwin. When he was 30 minutes overdue I phoned him to learn he was not coming as a friend from a different town had turned up unannounced so he couldn't come. So I grabbed my camera and went to Sindhuri Park where the tank was lit up and a god was being carried around the sides of the pool preceded by about 16 girls in red doing a sort of jumping dance with sticks. I hurried to the exit so I could film them. As I walked back toward the entrance 3 teenage boys came up behind me and one of them jumped up and tweaked my cheek as for a baby. His embarrassed



up the NCC Nagar road and out toward the hills and Agriculture college. Having said that the orioles have gone I thought I heard one and then saw a black headed oriole in a tree with large yellow blossoms. In the same small tree were purple rumped sunbirds, black headed cuckoo shrikes and babblers, chipmunks and assorted bulbuls. It is strange that having noted that these cuckoos were absent this year, this morning I saw at least 6 pairs. I had my usual [nice] idlis and wada and then half an hour to prepare the first of a set of lectures on regulation of gene expression – always my favourite teaching subject. Sai turned up in his little car at 9.45, keen to get me going. He then told the students about my special lecture “when I would thrill them with my achievements” and farewell function “where you can all interact with him”. “On Saturday he will be available at the guest house for more interaction”. Not if Moin has anything to do with it [he is arriving on Saturday morning from Hyderabad]. I think Sai Gopal is sensitive to the fact that I am paid up until the day I leave.

Had an enjoyable lecture then went over to main building and at last found Sunil. He has some research assistant job with Dr Devi who (ab)uses him as a general office attendant. He was supposed to have the weekend off when he was coming to see me but she then insisted that he went with her to Bangalore to do some work at the weekend. She was not there today so we had a nice gentle chat while I drank my mug of tea. We arranged that he would come this evening to go to dinner. Venkatesh then drove me back to the guest house where I set off on the last bit of review preparation; I have decided to re-draw two of the figures rather than have rather poor copies from the author’s papers. I finished at about 7.00. It is very hot [30-32 deg] but I did my duty and sat in the sun for a short time reading the Hindu. I find that cures me of any feeling that I should be outside in this nice weather and happy to sit under the fan writing. Libby phoned for a nice chat. Had usual nice lunch then 40 minute sleep before getting back to work. At 4.00 a depressed Sunil arrived on a friend’s bike to say that madam is back and wants him to stay in all evening doing some typing for her. This is the one thing that makes me angry here – seniors having no care for the people who work for them. Most of the time Sai Gopal is ok with this. After some sad murmuring about his sad life he said that he would come anyway and do the typing later. *As he has still not arrived at 8.00 I guess that the wicked witch had got him.* I went for my usual gentle stroll at 5.00 with the setting sun softened by thin cloud. Inevitably I was seen by Lokesh on the way back so had to accept coffee. He first did the usual thing of bringing out a kitchen chair for me to sit in the garden. As others all stand this is not comfortable so I have trained him to bring 2 chairs. They have a new calf, only 4 days old. I asked what do they do with them when they grow up but he did not know. He told me to wait 5 minutes as he dashed off on his scooter to collect a friend who lives near. His English was a bit better than Lokesh so we had a bit more of a chat. Then back for a short read of Wolf Hall, on the roof in the last dying light. I stayed until it was dark but no sign of mosquitoes. Then more review; I think I have it finished.

By 8.30 I decided Sunil was not coming so I had dinner of shortbread, grapes and chocolate. I then watched The girl with the dragon tattoo while drinking my first tiny bottle of BA wine (Argentinian Malbec); both were excellent.

**Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February.** I woke as usual at 6.30 and gave myself a treat of half an hour read before getting up. Then my usual walk during which I saw 3 birds that are rare and have been missing this year. The first was the Blue-faced Malkoha then the forest wagtail and then a glimpse of the long tailed paradise flycatcher looping flight through the bamboos. The wagtail was washing in the stream that crosses the path beneath the bamboos so I got a lot of poor pictures of it. I saw a lot of the black headed oriole. Had excellent warm idlis and wada, specially welcome after last night’s fast. I then had a panic lecture preparation when I found I could hardly understand my lectures on attenuation. Sai Gopal took me to my lecture and explained that some students would be absent as there was some registration process going on and also some function in the auditorium. In fact there were only 7 girls waiting for me and they said they were about to go off to the function but they would like to chat first which was nice as I don’t get much opportunity with them. I told them I was worried that we would not finish the syllabus. “Don’t worry sir we never finish but it is no problem”. I said I think india is a crazy place. “No sir SV University only. They were a nice looking witty group so we wandered out into the sun for a photo then I went to Department to check with Sunil. He had sent messages to me and tried to phone but always got a *phone is off* message. He was very contrite and to make up for it he phoned his colleague to get her to throw her scooter keys out of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor window so he could drive me back home. He came, drank half a bottle of water, then lay on the bed murmuring about his difficult life. I managed to cheer him up a bit and then sent him off with a vague

plan that we would do something in the evening. Usual good lunch interrupted by a goodbye visit from Hemanth who was going to his native place and from Edwin returning my memory stick which he had borrowed with advice from Moin on callus formation in plants. I spent the rest of the day proof reading a printed copy of my review and then doing a lot of corrections to the figures. Just as I was about to go off for a walk at 5.00 Venu bounded in to tell me he is back and to ask if I want tea; it came in 3 minutes was drunk in 2. I walked up usual NCC route but turned right at the top to see where it would go. 15 minutes late I was at the back of the Virology Department where I found Sai Gopal in and pleased to see me to give me half of the UGC money and the Biochemistry money [12,000 rup in all]. Sunil was there and we decided it would be best if he finished some of his work tonight and then came to visit here tomorrow afternoon. Tomorrow it is Mohammad's birthday so a national holiday so, as Sai Gopal always says, I can take rest. We watched the sunset from the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor corridor/balcony and I think I got a good photo as well. On my walk back I met some of the 1<sup>st</sup> year microbiologists who wanted a chat then was met by the 2<sup>nd</sup> year biochemists who took me up on to the roof of the Annapurna canteen to drink tea out of little plastic cups. This was where I met them and became friends with Edwin last year. He was not there this time. They are a friendly bunch and good fun. I then had the long trudge back. After 20 minutes I was out again. I try to be positive if I have no company for dinner and take pics of Tirupati instead on the way to Sindhuri Park. Taking pics down garland road one boy got very excited that I was taking his pic he leapt up, grabbing a rose and leaping down to present it. People really do seem to like having their pics taken. On the corner of Nethaji road and Ganshi road there is a big well lit expensive shoe shop and tucked into a corner of the flight of steps leading to it an old cobbler has set up shops, repairing shoes and having some to sell. I surreptitiously [sp] took a photo but was given away by the flash; the cobbler then invited me to take more pics. Had a nice dinner of Kaju pannier fried rice and pista ice cream before taking auto to First gate to visit the botany students. They looked a rough lot and were all taught in Telugu medium colleges so conversation was tiring. One was very dark and glared as if in anger all the time, sneezing and wiping his nose on his sleeve, but keen to chat. Having explained brilliantly in my lecture that PQQ is not a vitamin, they all wanted to ask about that –“is it really a vitamin sir”. A bit disappointing. They were very impressed that I could remember where some of them were sitting in my lecture the other day. As usual they were a nice interested lot and they explained that it is easy to get into SVU for botany, more difficult for microbiology, then virology, then biochemistry is most difficult. *I keep falling asleep but I want to finish this.* I then moved from B block to C block to find a student to drive me home but I failed. I found him [Sarath Babu] but he did not offer. Had a gentle chat with him and Bala Ankaya before leaving. I waved good bye but then was chased by 2<sup>st</sup> year microbiologists who had found a driver from 1<sup>st</sup> years. His name is same as Sunil Kumar as I know, having had 4 txt messages already from him. On the way out of the hostel we met Edwin and Naik coming back from eating in Balaji colony. They invited me to go and watch a cricket match tomorrow morning. *It is now 11.45 and I am nearly asleep.*

**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> February.** I woke with a shock at 8.10 this morning, pulled myself sluggishly out of bed and saw it was actually 5.10 so went back to sleep and woke at 8.10 again to open the door to order my breakfast; for a change I ordered puri masala but when it arrived it was masala dosa; sorry sir puris have run away (probably should have been out). Anyway it was good. I gave up the idea of a walk as it was already getting hot and decided to really finish off the review [formatting checking etc] and email it. I was expecting a call to tell me when the cricket match but no reply from Edwin's phone. It was 8.30 -11.00 so when Edwin called at 10.30 it was too late. No problem as I had become obsessed with finishing my work. Good lunch then sleep then wait for Sunil. We had decided that the best way he could come was to come on a holiday (today is Mohammed's birthday). Due at 2.00 he did not come. It was rather hot and humid with a lot of cloud so it was no hardship to sit with the door open and fan on full. I then sorted photos and backed them up; then photoshopped Thumulagunta so I can put on a CD for Balaji. Although hot and sticky I went to the dairy farm for a slow stroll. Shock horror – they have built a wall across my walk; they have sold the land to build flats on the Thumulagunta side, as explained by Chotappa later. I met some of the Botany girls; I told them I knew their faces but could not remember their subject. “We are previous ladies from Botany (ex-convicts?) so I think you know us”. Of course I remember giving you a lecture last week. They seem more bright than the boys. Edwin then phoned to say he was sorry that I had missed the cricket. When I told him I had sat in all afternoon waiting for Sunil he was a bit irritated and said he wanted to come but did not want to disturb me. I said I wanted him to come but did not want to disturb him so much

of the time. "No sir don't say like that". I will miss him. He is keen to meet up this evening but has to go to have his eyes checked with his new glasses at 6.30. But this is India sir so it may be 8.30. I will call you at 7.0 to tell you. Of course he probably won't so I will have usual problem. In the middle of a nice chat with Libby my phone flashed to say it needs recharging (with money) so I phoned Moin to get him to do it online. Just as dusk was setting in 3 golden orioles flew into a tree at the same time as a black winged kite flew out of it. The first one I have seen this year; I am glad it is still around. The rest of the walk was accompanied by the sounds of returning crows and mynahs and drongos doing their thing from telephone wires and fence posts. I saw a pied bush chat which is like a small Indian robin but with white instead of red. I collapsed at the guest house on to the roof with Wolf Hall where Venu soon came up with a big cup of sweet tea. He is always attentive but now my stay is ending they all seem to have reasons to drop in and check I am ok. I have the silly business of tips to sort out. Gopi called for a nice chat. Edwin phoned to say that he was at the doctors and that he might be there till 8.30 so we agreed I would go to town to eat and he might drop in later. So after an hour of preparing my powerpoint presentation for tomorrow I set out for a quick dash to town and had the luck of an auto immediately; he must have known me as I asked if I wanted Sindhuri park. So to avoid thinking I went there for thai spicy fried rice then a direct auto home. On the way the driver chatted on his phone [left hand] while alternately revving up with his right hand and leaning across to change gear on the left hand handlebar with his right hand also. On return watched some Attenbourough in the undergrowth; Edwin then phoned to say he had only just finished and can he come tomorrow. .

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> February.** *Now writing this while waiting again for Edwin who has just phoned to delay till 7.30. No problem.* I was woken at 5.30 by people waiting for a car beneath my window so read until 7.0 then up and off for my usual walk. On the way up to NCC nagar Lokesh came up on the back of a bike with 3 of his friends all off to college. Under the yellow blossom tree a man stood watering some plants but the black headed oriole was still there but difficult to locate cos of the noisy babblers and purple sunbirds. And an emerald-coloured leaf bird, the first I have seen this year. Later had a really good view of the paradise fly catcher with its long tail flowing through the bamboo. No pictures. Got back for usual nice idlis/wada then revised my lecture on attenuation and saved my power point presentation for later in the morning on my pen drive. As we arrived at my lecture I tried to give this to Sai Gopal for my lecture but he said "what lecture sir". I reminded him that he had asked me to give this lecture to the whole department this morning. He had forgotten. Then we saw some of my students ambling out of the building; they explained they had to go to register for something but would be back in 5 minutes. I asked what I should do and a gang of the boys arrived and told me to come and start the lecture which I did, the girls arriving 15 minutes later. I enjoyed the lecture. After tea I went to find Sunil. His phone does not send or receive messages or calls from mine. His boss –dreadful witch - had made him go and collect some equipment from town [it was a public holiday]. He is scared to argue as she has so much power over him, delaying his PhD registration. No one was around to give me a lift back so I set out to walk in the damp heat. Fortunately Sunil saw me leave so borrowed a scooter and picked me up. We had a nice chat about his situation in the department till at last he was a bit more relaxed. Then in came lunch and out went Sunil. I sorted out a few photos then fell asleep with fast fan. Soon after I woke I had one of my optical migraines for about an hour; it was enough to stop me reading so I just tried to go to sleep again. Surya phoned later to say that he can exchange my excess rupees if I have any and to say his parents want me to bring him a load of sweets. I told him to tell them I would buy them for him in uk. After big glass of tea from Venu I drifted in the hot humid cloud evening up my usual route. As I was about to get a good picture of the water hens Lokesh's little brother came up on his bike and scared them away. His friend of the morning bike ride then appeared and we had a nice chat before I went for coffee in Lokesh's garden with his young aunt sister uncle brother grandfather and 2 others. *Now it is nearly 8.00 and I am still waiting.*

Eventually Edwin arrived. He has had a cold for last few days and says he does not want to do much. He proposed a good plan; he went down to Manasa near the town club and brought back some takeaway from the upstairs Chinese restaurant – very good gobi manchurian and spicy fried rice which we shared followed by some Christmas cake. He then went home after nice chat.

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> February.** My last work day which was a bit disappointing. I went for a birdless bird walk, except for a nice green leafbird. It was very humid and hot and cloudy. I poked myself in the eye on a bamboo shoot. I walked along the usual track parallel to the hills then turned left down the long track to the main

small road to agric college. I had forgotten that the cadets lived nearby and they use that track and adjacent bushes as their latrine; not so pleasant. Had delicious idlis/wada as it was almost hot. I finished my 10.00 lecture and expected to give my department special lecture as advertised at 11.00. But because of some quarrel in the state parliament yesterday there was a student strike. We met a gang of them as we walked from virology to microbiology with the projector and computer. They had a big banner and were shouting aggressive slogans. When they say me it all died away and they broke up and came over to ask usual questions, shaking hands. They agreed to leave microbiology alone until I finished my lecture. My pen drive with my lecture on seemed to be empty so they got a new computer to check. At least 6 people messing about while the students sit in the dusty room, waiting. A computer expert arrived and said my pendrive had a virus. It didn't when I set out that morning it must have done the usual thing and picked it up from the first computer it was put in. Sai Gopal thought that perhaps Sudarshanan in botany may have just emptied it so he phoned him. He soon turned up with his laptop showing that he had only downloaded my botany lecture. So I got him to copy that onto our computer and I gave that lecture instead, starting exactly one hour late. A pity as I had spent about 2 hours creating a different bigger set of pictures for the microbiology students. At the end of course I was shattered, having given 2 lectures with no drink between etc. Had bad lunch as it was the same boring thing but completely cold; cold dal never looks attractive. I had a sleep and then was collected at 4.00 for my 3.30 farewell function. The students go to so much trouble decorating the floors with chalk welcome pictures sprinkled with flowers. We had to hang about until 4.45 for the chief guest, the Rector, to arrive. Two other guest professors were there standing outside with me making very dull conversation. My gut had been feeling nervous, either just that or infection; so excused myself and went off to loo. When I got back the Rector had arrived so everyone went in and sat down. Then the usual ritual of calling the guest to come up and sit at the table [called the dais usually but miscalled the dias by sai gopal]. Then a remarkable little sung prayer by 2 of the girls. The notes sound so random in pitch and length with a lot of twittering decoration that it is remarkable that they sing it perfectly together. Then speeches by everyone, praising this outstanding scientist etc etc boring etc. My gut started to feel nervous again so it was a grim ordeal which I smiled my way through. My speech was short. The Rectors was long and partly in Telugu, telling how the VC had sent him home to his native place 15 km away because of the strike. He forgot out function till SG phoned him so he jumped in his car and drove here. It was obviously a good story as shown by student shouted laughter. The visiting professors felt they had to tell us about themselves etc. Sai Gopal then assured everyone that I would be getting a nobel prize next year. He told them that I am so generous, giving my expenses to pay for the education of poor boys in thumulagunta (entirely imagined). Next the students are told that I know many influential scientists in uk and that I can help them get PhD places or jobs in UK; this after I have struggled to convince them that it is not possible. After shawl and garland and CDs and flowers a few more speeches and we broke up. I thought I needed loo again so tried to get away but had to spend ages posing for pictures with girls and boys until desperate and broke away to try to hurry to virology with dignity. After, I saw they had all dispersed and I had not even said goodbye. Laxshman biked me back to the guest house where I now seem to be ok. Cannot face going out alone so will eat nothing unless very hungry which would suggest there is no real problem. I phoned SG to say sorry for dashing off and he immediately drove here for a nice chat.

One bit of brightness; to get a train ticket from Hyderabad Moin had to queue for 4 hours and then was put on a waiting list with 26 ahead of him for AC sleeping coach. He had decided to get that train anyway even if it meant sitting or standing all night. I phoned just as he as getting aboard his sleeper, so that is a relief. The journey is between 12-14 hours. *I have one last film to watch [thirteen days] but no wine to go with it.*

*I am writing the next part of this diary in my room in the Trident Hilton, filling in time before my early morning flight.*

I watched 13 days; excellent.

**.Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> February.** I was right; I had the dreaded Tirupati tummy. Moin arrived to nurse me at about 10 in the morning and eat my breakfast. And lunch. At last I had the sense to take a tablet as they say here. It was a mix of antibiotics. I assumed it also had anti-run stuff but it didn't. I remember little of that day. I spent most of the time lying on my bed chatting with Moin and reading Larsson's The Girl who Played with Fire. At last our requests for another mattress for him [I had stolen his to make a comfortable double mattress] bore fruit and he was also able to lie down; he had had very little sleep on his 14 hour journey

from Hyderabad. It had never occurred to me before to get the staff to get evening meals but it was no problem. They went to Sindhuri park. I didn't eat much. Had poor night as it was so hot and of course I was kept awake with thoughts of how difficult it would be to travel like this. Later in the evening I took a loperamide and started to feel more secure.

**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> February.** I had so many plans for these last 2 days – all wrecked. No last visits to Gandhi road or Sindhuri park or Kalyan residency, or Thumulagunta. Having Moin here made it all ok. We salvaged quite a lot by getting people to visit us. Balaji came from Thumulagunta with the almost black skinny boy with the big teeth and nice wavy hair who I hadn't seen this year. I had previously made a CD of the Thumulagunta pictures so gave this to B. We then looked at all the Thum pictures since 2002. Last year I had given a CD to Balaji with some money to get prints made for the boys and their families. Moin had a long chat with him and confirmed that he had done that so I left him with 500 rupees to do the same this year. Off they went after more pics on the roof, and a presentation to .... Of one of the last bars of chocolate.

Charlie then arrived with Stephen for a nice chat. He never lets S use the internet cos he is scared of porn stuff. M explained to him how to avoid that and I gave some advice as a wise experienced father. I have some say here as I had given him a few thousand rup to help with Stephens schooling. I think he is too strict and M thinks that I convinced him that the best thing he could do is to pass on some of his tremendous expertise for S to use internet for his homework. Stephen did his usual thing of sitting nervously, not really taking much part until I remembered I still had one bar of chocolate to give away; he seemed quite excited. I showed the plastic sculptured picture of Jesus given me by the Biochemistry Dept students; I told Charlie that such pictures are not our tradition so Liz would like him to have it. He was delighted so I took a couple of pictures and gave it. Off they went after more photos on the roof. Sai Gopal then arrived with the remaining 10,000 rupees from UGC. I was feeling much better thanks to immodium and antibiotics and even ate a biscuit and later some rice and gobi Manchurian collected from from Sindhuri park. Before that we went for a short walk up NCC nagar partly to say goodbye to Lokesh but met him very soon with his brother walking, the opposite direction, on the way to Thumulagunta. We went up to the pond but no sign of the water hen. In fact we saw almost no birds except babblers and koils. It was horribly humid and hot. We called in briefly to Lokesh's family to say goodbye. Edwin had not come as I'd hoped the day before; when I phoned he said he had important exams on Monday so could he come Monday night. When I told him I would leave at 8.0 am Monday morning "Oh sir I am so sorry and I have not seen you enough"; so he agreed he would call in later in the evening. We drifted about finishing packing and then Edwin arrived with his 2 best friends, Daik and Ramaswamy[?] for a really nice chat during which I discovered that Raghav and Tammi, 2 biochemist friends from past visits, were also working in Hyderabad university, in the same department as Moin. When I asked their plans they told me that Daik would easily get a good government job cos he was the lowest caste and so would get a reserved place. I told them I thought it a dreadful system but glad he would benefit and that he should be an especially good honest incorrupt government man. They all agreed he should. Then Edwin and I went out on the dark roof for a sad goodbye. I tried to give him a farewell present which I said he should not open until Tuesday. It was 2k rupees, with a note to say that it was for his new glasses which cost about that; he had been slightly embarrassed when he told me their cost. He went into his floppy mode with no sir I like to give presents not to receive them. I told him that he understood me then and reminded him that I had accepted his gift [a mug with pics of me on it]. Anyway he allowed me to stuff the envelope into his pocket and gave me a big gangly hug. He said that he had always been impressed when I told him of previous friends and especially meeting Moin and others when on a short project in Hyderabad; "you never seem to forget them - please do that for me, please remember me for ever". No problem.

We were concerned that our driver would not know the way to the airport, and I had no maps. Then brilliant Moin went to Google maps and we took photos of the screen.

*While writing this in the Trident hotel I have had calls from Moin who is now on his bunk hoping to sleep all the 14 hours to Hyderabad; from Charlie to thank me for Stephens gift; then Gopi to say sorry he had only managed one visit; then Edwin to say he missed me and to thank me for my present [a contribution to cost of his new glasses]. I feel extremely lucky.*

*Now writing at home in bed on day after return, looking out at a rainy morning.*

**Monday 21<sup>st</sup> February.** We had a bad night as it was so hot and the mosquitoes have discovered that the antimosquito device has finished. I could have used the AC but it is noisy. Got up and finished packing while

Moin had idlis and wada. Of course we had to pack a lot of stuff into Moin's bag: all my books except *Whoops*, all the David Attenborough's DVDs (others had not been interested in having them and Moin was absolutely delighted), last of the shampoo and toothpaste, electric extension, bedside light. I left 40 empty water bottles, 3 floormats and my broom to the first scavengers to arrive. The car arrived 20 minutes early as requested at same time as Sai Gopal. So, mercifully, none of the nervous hanging about waiting for car. Poor Moin kept thinking that everything might be for the last time so was sentimentally saying goodbye to roof and room and cockroaches. It was a dull cloudy hot morning and I was feeling dull. The immodium had done a good job so I felt more secure in that department than I ever had when driving home. I have thought that this might be my last visit but my dullness antagonized any sentimental feelings. The staff all stood round chatting about me while we forced my case into the back of the smallish Indycar. Apparently they were all commenting on how thin I had become. Sai Gopal was unusually sentimental in farewell as I told him it was the best organized visit ever. Then off we went at 8.00 exactly. I was very glad we were only aiming at Chennai airport and not setting out on the long slog through hateful Kanchipuram to Mahabalipuram. Of course if I had planned that then it would have been cancelled cos of Tirupatitummi. The first 2 hours were rural and attractive as always but I had little sentimental feeling. The driver wanted to stop in some hot noisy small town for breakfast. Moin pleaded my 'illness' and I passed over my remaining Walkers shortbread for his breakfast, which he immediately accepted. We didn't use our maps because the driver took the first important decision and ignored the possible Kanchipuram route so we assumed he knew the way. I was surprised when he said we did not need the Chennai bypass then worst fears were confirmed when he stopped to ask the way as we were well onto the Poonamallee road leading to the centre. His directions were then to go to Guindy, which I knew is the right way and inevitable now that he had committed us to the long route in and out of Chennai. The site of an airport sign was wonderful as was the AC. We wondered if he was unable to read as he seemed not to see any road signs. Amazingly soon I saw the Radisson hotel and by hitting the driver 3 or 4 times on the left shoulder I got him onto the inside lane and into the welcoming Trident Hilton, only 15 minutes later than estimated. The welcome was in fact 2 big security men with undercar mirror trolleys. We were declared safe and were soon in the large marble cool hotel. I had emailed them to ask if I could have a room very early (11.00); the normal check in time is 2.00. They came trotting up when I gave my name, with a key and sheet ready prepared for me to sign, so a good move. I had even remembered to have 20 rupees for tip for the man with my bag so avoided my usual apologetic shrugs. Moin flopped onto his bed with a huge smile; I have done my duty for my friend he said. I set out to rehydrate myself then we went to the business centre to print my boarding pass then wandered round to the pool with its flowering shrubs, perfect lawn, noisy coils and a surprising coucal. The place seemed full of Swedes who had hogged all the loungers. Chowdappa soon arrived from his flight from the Andaman islands. He had planned to come to Tirupati to see me on my last weekend until Sai Gopal who told him that I had warned him earlier that I wanted no visitors for my last weekend. So he had changed his plans and gone to a conference on the Andamans. We went down for lunch which I actually looked forward to. Chowdappa was in a good mood and had rice and Goan fish curry. Moin had 2 butter rotis [our usual] and tandoori chicken while I had fish and chips which was Indian style and good. Having had nothing to eat for 2 days I enjoyed it. I was more impressed by Chowdappa than previously. I asked him a lot of stuff about his work because I did not want to talk much. He is involved in many research projects as coordinator between a range of groups, some of which are international. He didn't impress Moin because he so obviously enjoyed talking about himself. He was very pleased with the way Vinay is progressing. Apparently he does not want to do as Chowdappa wants – to go and do a PhD in USA. Vinay wants to get into business related to his course here. C has given him a big building in case he needs it in Bangalore and also a lot of land. Chowdappa had already told me that he would pay for lunch. I think he was a bit surprised at the cost, about 2000 rupees, and he left a tip of 10 rupees. Moin was worried that C would take over our last afternoon so he cleverly went and told the driver to bring the car to the door then came back and told us that he had checked that the driver was ok and was available at the door to take C to the airport for his flight back to Bangalore. I played the good guy and said we must spend 10 minutes in our room first. Chowdappa meekly accepted this. He tried to give me lots of packets of Indian snacks which I rejected but took a heavy box of Indian sweets, which were handed over by an unusually sentimental C who said that he really missed his son. He then handed over the 25,000 promised (£400) towards my flight with a complicated speech that made it clear that in exchange 'next time you will visit Bangalore and I

personally will take you for a few days to the Andamans'. Off he went leaving Moin very nervous that this will make me less likely to return. When the driver came back he asked for the 2,300 rupees for the car. Sai Gopal had been adamant that Chowdappa was paying but the driver said that C had told him that he had already given me money for it. So it came out of the 25,000 he had left me. That was not the deal but of course it was ok.

I don't know if I will go back. The last 2 visits I have felt that it might be my last visit. This has usually been triggered by nervous gut before lectures and going down town. Since actually doing what I have often considered, taking small doses of immodium, then that problem might be dealt with. We spent the time before it was time for Moin to leave at the pool and then back in the room plotting how we might get M to visit UK to do some science or as a tourist. Then a slightly tearful hug and off he went into the traffic to the rail station.

I went and quickly got immersed in Larsson's thriller, sitting by the pool in shorts. The hefty Swedes were showing off in the pool which discouraged me from swimming [not difficult]. I returned to the room and wrote some diary then packed. It is so easy as I have so little and heavy stuff was left with Moin. My planned presents were not bought as I was incapacitated. I kept the Chowdappa rupees and left Moin with the remainder [about 10,000] to keep him alive until he gets his scholarship money. It is crazy; he has the scholarship but they [as usual apparently] don't pay it until a 9 month delay. I persuaded M to accept it as a loan till next year. He grasps every hint that I might be back with a smile and special tone of Thank you sir. At 8.00 I tried to sleep with little success, partly because of noisy Swedes in the foyer echoing around the hotel. I was nervous about finishing my novel, my last, and then having nothing to read at the airport. Eventually I got to sleep only to be woken by Hugh at 11.30. Had a bit more sleep then woken by call girl [no] at 1.00 and soon ready to leave. A big shock as I left – it was pouring with rain. I am so glad I arranged this hotel scheme, with a 5 minute drive only to the airport. They are still rebuilding the arrival and departure lounges so we queued and fought our way to near the departure place. Then splashed through the puddles into the confusion of people saying goodbye in the rain and blocking the way into the airport.

British Airways always have staff ticking off names as soon as we arrive in the airport; they then give instructions and the hour long business of checking and security. When I checked in I told my story of how I travelled on this flight every year since it started; she was very sweet and put my name into the computer in case a place became available [it didn't]. More waiting then more then more then on board for the fight for space in the overhead locker. My neighbours, from Chennai, were a nice old couple on their way to Salt lake city by way of London and Dallas. My overhead light did not work so no reading and my screen was only half functioning but enough to watch most of 3 films. Got some sleep. The first food was an omellette. Has no one told BA that omellettes have to be light and fluffy and hot – not cool and like solid rubber; horrible. We had a snack of chocolate éclair and biscuits in the middle of the night and then excellent chicken curry with rice and lime pickle for dinner. I must be recovered. We arrived early and my bag was one of the first off. The exchange rate for buying my £400 of rupees was 90 to the pound so I would only get £256. I pointed out that I had received exactly this number of rupees [25,000] for £400 on the way out. He explained that the rates are fixed by the government. So I scooped up my rupees and, followed by the next 6 people in the queue flounced off. Surya has already agreed to buy my rupees at the proper rate so no problem. So nice to find Libby waiting for me with my fleece and nice car and drizzly misty drive home.

So another successful visit.