

2013 diary India

January 14th – February 18th 2013.

Monday Jan 14th. This day is Pongal in South India and to arrive then would probably cause inconvenience. So came a day later than usual. Perhaps that is why I was ready and almost packed by Sunday. Sunday night weather forecast had Severe Weather Warnings all over uk. Set off in usual anxious sad mood at leaving home, grateful as always for Libby's acceptance of this feature of our life. English Rose Collection were on time and off I went at 5.30 am. Traffic was worryingly heavy immediately, Andy the driver explaining that this was due to unloading of a container ship. It started snowing near Basingstoke and we slowed down in the inside lane, being passed by reckless container lorries. Anyway no problem within 90 minutes of leaving home I was checked in and through security. They have stopped giving free upgrades but I was offered one for £189. My chosen seat was near front so no problem with stowing my luggage but I shared the area with 4 babies and 4 toddlers which were no real problem. While waiting to board I had a nice chat with an indian from Kenya / Canada who was coming to Chennai to welcome his ministry of Canadian defence spacecraft for its launch from the launch site that I visited years ago. He was pleased that I knew it was next to a bird sanctuary; it is there because so much toxic stuff is produced during launch leading, he claims to interesting mutant birds. We were delayed for one hour while snow was blasted off the wings. Usual dull flight with inconsiderate big indian smashing my knees every 20 minutes. Food was good [veg option]. We made up time and arrived only 15 minutes late. More improvements in the airport meant that I was through immigration before I realised it. Then had to wait 35 minutes for my bag, to be met by smiling Moin; almost unchanged except slightly thinner and with more pronounced rice belly. They have improved car parking etc so found hotel car quickly and 10 minutes late we were in Trident Hilton thinking how fast the year had passed.

Tuesday Jan 15th. Surya had done a good job in convincing Ravi at the Kalyan Residency that his driver should be there by 9.0. He arrived by 8.0 and the reception desk phoned to tell us, losing a valuable hour's sleep. For me we arrived at 8.30pm; for Moin it was about 3.00am. Good driver but with frightening permanent scowl and glowering bloodshot eyes.; this turned into a happy beaming smile when I asked him his name and could repeat it flawlessly – Ramachandran. The roads out of Chennai were wide and fast. We returned by the alternative route accidentally taken last year because there are huge roadworks on main road. So we had a slow bumpy crawl for 10 miles but then lovely drive through rural Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, avoiding toxic Tirrutani and arriving in three and a quarter hours at the guest house. Sai Gopal had done as promised and we were met by 5 of previous staff, smiling and enjoying my thanks for a room with an extra mattress, all lights working, fan and AC perfect, hot water. Moin then asked for a table and 2 minutes later one was provided with a lungi on it [the table I stole from workmen 2 years ago]. Smiling Sai Gopal soon arrived and got me a lovely big bedside table and some white stackable chairs for use on roof and for visiting students. The electricity adaptor, bought in Heathrow works perfectly in the shoddy socket [1st time ever]. Had nice chat with SG and Moin about the nice new Vice Chancellor and the complicated story of why there are now separate departments of virology and microbiology was explained.

Forgetting that there is a train at 5.00, Moin and I set out on an expedition past the rail crossing, having to creep beneath the bars amongst all the motorbikes to the new supermarket where we got nearly everything I need: toothpaste, floor mats, broom, crisps, soap and cashew nuts [*eating now on Wednesday evening with lukewarm welcome Limca*]. On the way back we met my old friend from the dairy farm who keeps rabbits there (chowpatta) who sends his respects to madam.

After unpacking and setting up my home we went to dinner, walking nearly all the way down to Balaji colony before getting auto for Sinduri park hotel for dinner of South Indian Thali served by usual welcoming waiters. Gogula stores, run by Surya's friend, was closed but his friend was next door and we bought thin cotton bedsheets which are a bit flowery as they will go to Moin's mum when I leave. In the place I usually buy a bedside light they denied they had one with rechargeable battery but as we made our disappointed way out there was a shout and a severely disabled assistant, who operates from a sitting position on the floor, called out and scurried crabwise to us pointing out exactly what we wanted on a high shelf which he reached by hauling himself gibbonwise onto the counter. So now I am fully equipped. Finished the day of course with long sleepy chat.

Wednesday Jan 16th. *Writing this at 9 in evening with Nash Ensemble playing Mozart piano quartet.* Had very disturbed night from traffic and dogs, eventually woken from a deep sleep at 7.30 for tea. Had tear-jerking red soup with idli and wada for breakfast; good. Moin worked out how to best use the dongle for linking to internet so I can get quite good consistent internet. Then spent morning mooching about, sleeping, chatting and reading Sunday times on roof in sun. Moin got staff to go to Sinduri park to bring lunch of chapattis and unidentifiable 'curry'. He then packed up and left rather sadly at 3.30 off for his 14 hour train ride back to work in Hyderabad. His work has continued to go well but they [central government] still owe him 11 months grant; he has had to borrow from friends to pay bills. They will pay next month – a year late.

As it remains a school holiday I went by auto for my first visit to Thumulagunta. Everywhere is more green than last few years. I went first to Barath Kumar's house at the entrance to the village where his uncle came running out to tell me all the boys had gone to the cinema. I asked him to tell them I will come tomorrow. Walking round to Balaji's family I had to run the gauntlet of most of the village mothers sitting in the road doing their washing in big aluminium pots with hosepipe and slapping on the concrete road. Very nice welcome with big smiles and waved washing. Balaji was out; this was all that his grandmother was able to communicate through her rapid chat and vigorous arm waving. Then my special friend Honey Shree ran up "do you remember me uncle?" Of course, Honey shree – you are my wonderful English speaker. "Yes and I translate for you and your special friend Barath Kumar". Another group of ladies came up with a mobile phone to tell me Ramana wants to chat; this was Venkataramana's mother. On the way out the nice girl that Libby was friends with ran out of her house to ask about Libby "we all remember your beautiful madam uncle". So a lovely gentle welcome in the late afternoon sun followed by a long walk all the way home with a half way break when a tiny boy on a full size lady's bike yelled from the opposite side of the road then wobbled enthusiastically across to me with two bags of small onions whirling round on his handlebars. "Remember I am Sekhar"; "yes of course". I promised that I would come next day and bring my camera for one photo sir. Was caught again on the crossing, making me pleased that I had done my tiny amount of exercising so that my back and tummy could cope with creeping beneath the barrier without too much loss of dignity. There was then still enough light to have two teas on the roof reading Sunday Times before coming in to start this diary.

As I was about to leave for dinner there was a knock and in burst Barath with his younger brother (10) Ganesh and teenage motorbike driver. Barath is now 15 but looking 13. He came up looking very serious then whipped out a tiny chocolate bar which he formally presented "Welcome to India sir". Next time he called me sir I asked if he remembered my name "Yes you are my CHREESH". They were on their way to town to buy something and wanted to make sure I would come to the village tomorrow. To show off to his brother and friend Barath dived into my case to

extract my green laser pointer then realised he should ask first so put it back and came up to beg like puppy which is rather his nature. So we pointed at stars and moon and Jupiter before a prolonged farewell "yes of course I am your friend Barath, of course I will come tomorrow".

A long walk into town was avoided when one of the staff drew up alongside in a shared auto down the junction at Balaji colony where I got a normal auto to Sinduri park for wonderful dinner of Paneer, Kaju rice and butterscotch ice cream while reading Pigs in Heaven by Barbara Kingsolver. Got an auto home after gentle stroll in warm summer night through temple area and Ghandi Road.

After writing this I watched the 1st episode of a 2003 BBC series Edge of Darkness. Excellent.

Thursday 17th January. Had usual disturbed night, woken at 6.30 by Venu "I heard you are here so I had to come and see for myself". He is the tall thin happy helpful boy who is usually on night duty. He travels 26km to work everyday by bike [motorbike]. After 20 minutes he appeared again with tumbler of scalding tea so I gave up and read, getting up and out for a walk by 7.15 up usual route towards NCC nagar. After 10 minutes the light cloud was gone and sun lit up the welcoming hills. They had good rains this year so it is very green and difficult to see the birds. I heard most of the usual birds and also saw a coucal very close up before it dived shyly into a thicket. At 8.30 exactly my breakfast arrived – a special rice dish called pongal – very good alternative to idli wada.

I now have internet access in guest house. It is fast but only with a good signal and that is outside. Now feeling settled in here. I went to department this morning to arrange my work. Although i was assured before coming that nothing will change compared with last year i find the students have already done the molecular biology course and they want me to do the microbial physiology / biochemistry course. I left my notes on this behind as i would not need them. No problem; i will quite enjoy preparing a new set. There is a sensible lady staff member who is very good at mol biol and easy to make arrangements with. I shall give one lecture a day at 11.0 so that she can do hers at her usual time

The new building at the PURSE centre where i worked last year is now operating, with a lot of newly-installed large equipment such as ultracentrifuges, and it was nice to meet all the previous staff. My favourite biochemistry student Lalitha is doing a project there. It seems that at least some of the grand scheme of sharing equipment etc is going well.

"We hit the national news last night as tigers are attacking the university". Translation: a leopard has been seen on campus next to the virology department. The VC phoned SG from Delhi and asked him "What is this I hear about you starting a zoo in the University". For some reason the senior staff in university [the Rector and Principal] felt it necessary to tour the departments to inform them to be careful. This meant an hour sitting having tea with pompous old men as i always have to be shown off. Small price to pay i guess. Sai Gopal's only concern about the leopard was for my safety and that of the rabbit that lives under the stairs in a small cage - because he is full of valuable antibodies they need for their research. I offered to take him to the guest house for protection but he worries that we will then attract the leopard there. Temperature here is about 27 deg with occasional light cloud and a cooling breeze. Sorry.

After usual lunch had a sleep then read Sunday times Culture section in sun on roof then off to Thumulagunta by auto, having been reminded in a phone call from Barath in which his name was only thing I understood. No sign of life in the village so wandered out to cricket field and had the usual welcome by a stampede of boys led by Barath and Mounish, one of my old friends who was absent last year. Madhu and Bobby and Honey Shree were there and a host of others. Barath took over photography and Mounish supervised binoculars. Eventually went to see Balaji who got

married this time last year and who now has a one month old baby. He was big before marriage and now seems to be exploding. More and more photos then walk home accompanied half way by B and Monish [a new older friend of B] and a hanger on whose name I forget. Half way home an auto came up but demanded 40 rupees quickly dropping to 30. Still too much so I waved him goodbye as another one arrived asking 20 [the correct fare] but I would have to sit on the tiny bench by the driver as the back was filled with stuff. After waving him away the original crawled up and told me to get in which means he had accepted the proper fare. The only way I could get out of promising to visit B tomorrow was to invite the three of them to the guest house tomorrow morning 11 to 1.0. *Surya just phoned for a nice chat on roof and I shall face up to a long walk down town for dinner.*

I was lucky enough to get an auto so soon back in Sinduri park for dinner of excellent paneer butter masala with one butter roti. "Sir I think you mean 2". Strolled back down Ghandi rd and Prakasam road to Balaji colony then auto home. The end of Garland road was blocked off so I thought that meant it would be peaceful without hurtling hooting bikes but they had not blocked the other end so it had become a bike park filled with frustrated bikers trying to turn round in the road. It was fairly early so I strolled through a few backstreets and found the school from which the dancers of last year came. Then auto home to salted cashew nuts and 2nd part of Edge of Darkness.

Friday 1th Jan. *I am writing this while waiting for Balaji but it is nearly 7.00 so may go to eat.* I had another very interrupted night, my last valuable sleep being disturbed at 6.30 by phone: "hello sir this is Barath Kumar". Followed by rapid excited Telugu. Perhaps he was phoning to say he will not be coming with friends as planned, as he did not turn up at 11.0. I finished the Kingsolver book while drinking my early beaker of tea; both were excellent. Went for nice morning walk up near Pig research place. They have continued to beautify everything so there were walls blocking some of my walks and a lot of low-lying scrub had been removed. There were 2 boys being taught how to jump fences in the horse area of NCC where I was approached by a small boy who I recognised "sir I am brother of Lokesh, I wanted to tell you it is not safe here because there is a tiger". No such luck. Fortunately some of the beautification has led to a clear route to the back of that part towards the hills, opening up alternative walks. I saw many of the commoner birds but often difficult to see: both bulbuls, both drongos, white browed babbler, usual babbler, female Koil, leaf bird, sunbirds, indian robin, mynah, crows, bee-eaters, parakeets, partridges. I have heard but not seen coppersmith and orioles.

I chose to have idli/ wada this morning and it was excellent, served by a new very competent staff member who told me this afternoon that he is the brother of my nice friendly staff boy Venu. Sai Gopal came for a happy chat. I said that I thought the lady staff member I chatted with yesterday seems very friendly and also very sensible. "She does seem like that but she will be nasty behind the back". Happy to say that this was a case of mistaken identity; my person is Hema, Virology expert on mol biol. The other is Piamoda Kumari, small new staff in microbiology whose activity led to the departments separating. B did not turn up; no problem. Had a strange lunch [ordered fried rice and some curry] of fried rice and a big sticky mound of reddish mush which I eventually identified as cauliflower; it was ok and I always have curds with sugar and a couple of lumps of chocolate.

I slept too long after lunch, against my plan to be really sleepy at night. Actually that does not usually work cos I then have to avoid sleeping during TV hour. Did more photoshopping of old pictures, interrupted by the lecturer [????] whose course I am taking. He is so keen to show agreement, understanding and respect that whatever I say he interrupts with Yes, good, excellent, even if I have asked a simple question like Do they know about Krebs cycle? His heart is in the right place and I have got everything sorted. I had a nice email from hugh with snowy oaklands way

picture and 2 emails from Libby one of which has an attached video I should watch [sounds like a sermon] but which did not open. The afternoon finished with a hot bucket shower and tea on the roof with strong breeze, dark clouds, and scratchy clatter of dead palm leaves; all very refreshing.

In the evening I waited until about 8.0 in case Balaji or Barath came, then walked half way down toward town when an auto stopped and we agreed 30 rupees to sinduri park. When we arrived he asked for 70 rup so I gave him 30 then upped it to 40 when he shouted; I don't know his reaction as I quickly walked into hotel/restaurant and had masal dosa which is usually breakfast but is excellent if I do not want to eat too much – followed of course by pistache ice cream. My good mood as I walked out of the hotel into the dark busy real world was diminished when I was hit by a motorbike. I wasn't even crossing the road, just strolling gently along. The driver was very very anxious as was his wife who jumped off as soon as we collided, the little child still clinging on. My leg was painful but no real problem so I waved him away and limped pathetically into the darkness amongst the other beggars. They accumulate around this part with their crutches and little carts, and sleep on the stone benches on the side of the busy road by a small temple; one of them was feeding a small rat that sat on his knee. Feeling nervous and irritated I weaved amongst the traffic outside the station and caught auto home. The first 2 asked for 60rup so I waved them away. The third asked for 30 then later asked for more as he realised that the guest house was well past the university entrance so he got 40 which is the correct fare.

I checked my leg had not a scratch or bruise on it then slumped in front of computer to watch 3rd part of Edge of Darkness followed by the 1st part of the 3 one-act opera set Il Trittico by Puccini. This is called Il Tabarro, very dramatic and wonderful with headphones.

Saturday 19th Jan. Usual interrupted night. Woke finally at 8.30 and went for dutiful cloudy walk, seeing almost no birds at all but it is still a good thing to do. Breakfast of good masala dosa, tightly wrapped in newspaper like fish and chips. I will be starting the whole of the 2nd semester lectures to 1st year [Previous year] virologists, on metabolism, bioenergetics and everything else. In the syllabus it is divided into mainly logical sections but with some closed related subjects in wrong places. So I have prepared the 'perfect' set of 5 introductory lectures [the quotation marks are to pretend to be modest]. I may make them into a set of powerpoint lectures so others can use them. I finished just in time for lunch which was twice as much as I wanted –fried rice, cabbage&onions, dry spicy onion /cauliflower baji and raita followed by curds and chocolate. Phoned Libby to hear about snow and Hugh's difficult journey to London. Then too much sleep.

It is unfortunate that I have to go to the roof for internet as it is uncomfortable to have the laptop on my lap. Eventually I rigged up a small cane armchair to take my sheet of hardboard with computer. Had nice long email from libby, enthusiastic about the snow. Online I checked BBC world news where there was a video of UK Red Alert position and a man in Wales showing Gordano school in Portishead which, like thousands of others had to close. Had a disappointing walk around Dairy farm where a lot of the previous fields have been left bare ready for building. No hoopoes or rollers, only red-rumped swallows, bee-eaters, mynahs, cattle egrets, paddy birds, little brown dove, indian pipit and of course crows.

Had a successful phone call to Edwin but line was poor so I am not sure when he says he will come; I have to make sure it is not same time as Moin. Failed to phone Sunil or Sahir but got Susai, Surya's old friend [the one Libby could understand] and we arranged to meet sometime tomorrow. I have just solved a worrying problem. For the last 2 days my vision was slightly blurred, especially in my good left eye. I have now found this is due to a very slight twist in the frame of my glasses, so

that left eye was out of focus; silly me. Had dinner as usual at Sindhuri park; excellent kaju gobi and roti, strawberry ice cream. Then home to Edge of Darkness.

Sunday 20th Jan. Only woke and read once in the night, the negative side effect being a fierce headache in morning, but this goes within ten minutes of mooching about. After a scalding beaker of tea, I asked for no breakfast and set off for long walk by NCC nagar parallel to the hills out past the veterinary university. A beautiful clear sunny morning with slight breeze that woke more birds up – mainly sunbirds, bulbuls and indian robins. The walk took 80 minutes but I did not feel tired so I guess I am getting fitter or hardened. It was strange having no plans for a Sunday except to tidy my room. Having set out to sort my photos better, I was interrupted by Manoj Kumar and Barath's young brother Ganesh who had been to visit the dairy farm. Manoj is keen to practice his English and he enjoyed looking at old pics of Thumulagunta and identifying relationships. Mounish is Bobby's brother; Barath's 'cute' name is Balu; Manoj's sister is Honey Shree; Balachandra is Dinesh's brother. The reason that Manoj, Barath and Monish did not come the other day as planned is that Monish's father had a tractor crash and broke his arm. He lives in the nice house opposite Balaji. After they left, with disappointingly small bits of chocolate, I collapsed with tea but was soon invaded by Barath, Mounish and Dinesh who entertained and exhausted me for more than one hour. They were very keen to see pictures of my family so I spent a lot of time hunting them down. This experience convinced me I must copy interesting ones into a single folder for future use so spent an hour doing this in the afternoon. Of course we were soon on the roof taking photos and filming dances and crazy hat throwing competitions. Dinesh suddenly disappeared and we found he had jumped down onto the single story roof below – more than two and a half metres. He lay on his back pretending to be hurt then somehow got back up, being pulled aboard by the others. I think he is not very bright but manages to get on with the others. They are all very affectionate so I have to pose with them in turn for the camera which seems to be safe in their hands. Barath was keen that I should visit this afternoon but I think we all need to ration our energy. I may have promised to go tomorrow.

Had excellent lunch of fried rice, gobi and curds then slept till 3.0. Did photos and read my book about the history of cancer on the roof. Susai was supposed to visit sometime today but when he eventually answered phone he postponed it. They still say "I lifted the phone sir but you were not clear" – from the days when we did "lift phones" to answer. I had a nice chat with Hugh in London; he seems very positive about his difficult journey there and optimistic about return journey although it was snowing when I called.

Lacking energy for a walk I read on roof till mosquito time; there is only one but he sits waiting for me by my usual place. Feeling like doing something constructive to earn my dinner I decided to put all my lectures on a powerpoint presentation. This can then be used by staff to see what I have done or printed out for students if sensible. It is a nice sort of easy satisfying job and I soon got into the swing of it.

Although not feeling hungry off I went for long walk down to town; all autos were full. I gave up by the First gate and went to see if there are any students back. B block seemed almost deserted, most doors being closed and few wandering students. One of these was very helpful and knew someone in virology so I was able to spend 20 minutes chatting with 2 final year students who I remembered from last year. They explained why there are so few students but expect them to arrive tomorrow morning. I gave up the idea of eating out so walked back through the dark campus keeping a watch out for leopards or tigers. The tiring day was finished slumped in front of the tele

watching the last 2 installments of Edge of Darkness while eating crisps, salted cashew nuts, a breakfast bar and Christmas cake. Excellent.

Monday 21st Jan. After a very unsettled night I woke with usual headache which disappeared as I shaved. About to go out the door I met Venu with a beaker of tea which I cooled down by repeated transfer to a spare glass. I left one dirty glass outside the door and kept half the tea for my return, having successfully ordered excellent Uppam for breakfast – a sort of thickish pancake of ground rice or semolina mixed with nuts and stuff. A lovely sunny breezy morning filled with the sound of koils, bulbuls and eventually golden oriole which never disappoints when he suddenly appears. As my lecture was not until 11.00 I had ordered breakfast for 9.15, the exact time I returned from walk. Sai gopal arrived at 10.30 to say there are only 2 students but I should go and interact with them which I did. Two very nice girls who are here because they live in Tirupati so had no hostel problem. Vici is slightly toothy with huge kind eyes and is married to Srinivasulu's last student. We chatted for one hour including very useful information on their knowledge and what standard I should aim at. The person who is responsible for that part of the course [Narasimha] came in and told them that they should not worry if they could not understand as he would repeat what I covered. They told me later that there will be need for that. On the way our Hema, a lady virology lecturer, called me in to say Srinivasulu is in the office so I called in to see him. He and his family are well and he is enjoying being retired. I asked why virology and microbiology were split and he said he is not interested in this. I thoughtlessly rejected his offer of a scooter lift back and wandered into Biochemistry only to find them gone to lunch, leaving me to walk home in very hot sun to my lunch. I had order fried rice and channa masala [chick peas] but got only rice and a bit of raita which was soon eaten as I'd had only small breakfast.

My after lunch nap was was shattered by the unscheduled arrival of Barath, Dinesh and Monaj who insisted on seeing more old videos and previous pictures, including ones of family I had sorted yesterday. Their school had a holiday and they had called to remind me to come to Thumulagunta at 4.00. We bartered and I promised to be there by 4.30. After shooping them out I went on roof for email and had nice interesting ones from libby. Then off to Thumulagunta. As I approached the autos at the top of the T road the drivers hopped off the wall to show me to the auto in front of the queue, the driver remembering to go on to the old small part of the village. He then asked for 40 rupees; No it is 30; No 40 so I offered him 30 or 50 with a request for change. He grinned happily and took the 30.

One hour later I am still feeling exhausted from my visit. I was ushered into Barath's house to sit and watch the 6 month daughter having her eye make-up applied and a decorated frilly party dress put on for photos. Barath had the small camera. Soon Mounish arrived to tell us that Booby was coming from school so out we went to welcome him in his white shorts, red shirt and enormous rucksack, eyelashes and grin. I then stood around helpless while my binoculars were shared and the 2 cameras used on everyone in the village. I have looked at Barath's pictures and some are excellent. There is a big difference from last year. Previously I have been an obvious outside visitor harnessed to take pictures. Last year Barath took me over as his special property and was very affectionate. This year the others have joined in, especially Mounish, Bobby and Dinesh who take turns to drape their hot little arms around me and all have to take turns with photos with me. All is more or less welcome but it is very exhausting . I was dragged off to interrupt a card game to extract Barath's father who took us to the adjacent house to look at a hen and a dozen tiny chicks. I don't know whose house it – it had 4 rooms including bed, kitchen and tele but very bare floor and walls and of course the chickens running about. After loads of pics with Honey-Shree's school friends I was

allowed out onto the cricket ground where others were playing the game with sticks called It is a beautiful time of evening to be doing this with the crows setting off home. I had to fight to escape to set off on the long hot walk home. Half way an auto with a lady passenger stopped and I joined them. We dropped at the temple at the top of the road and set off to guest house only to see the crossing was closed. I amazed the driver by directing him down the little side road toward town so I could get out and walk over the railway line.

Walked to sindurii park and had nice dinner [potato –allo masala and roti] then ride straight home to watch Anthony Hopkins and Derek Jackobi in The 10th man, a film based on graham green novel set in wartime paris and after.

Tuesday 22nd January. Very disturbed night again with a lot of reading, woken from deep sleep at 7.15 with beaker of tea. I fought inclination of going back to bed and slowly woke to go for usual walk with disappointly few birds but nice grey wagtail and bulbuls singing their hearts out. My breakfast of Pongal arrived at 9.15. Feeling lethargic I tidied my room and washed shirts and pants. At my lecture 3 more students brought the total to 5. Girls: Viji Vijayan – married to srinivasulu's last phd student, and Paaaaarvani. Boys:p. venkateswarlu, Suresh, Mallikarjuna. They are all bright [that is they laugh at my jokes] and are all a pleasure to teach. I actually started my lectures. Friday is a Muslim holiday and Saturday is Republic day so will probably not get full house till following Monday. After tea I found Sunil looking happier and relaxed compared with last year – good news. Found Murthi in biochemistry in a chirpy mood and he quickly fixed me up to do his bioenergetics teaching starting next week. Said quick happy efficient hello to Thyagaraju and then found the 4 girls busy in the lab who visited me last year on the roof – Lalitha and Bhanu and others with no names. A bit sad I will not be teaching them but they insist they will come and entertain me later. On the way out Laksham came running up and miraculously I remembered his name, mainly cos he was the best bike rider last year. He has just started PhD with Dr Hema. Good safe drive home to dull cauliflower lunch again followed by sleep.

I then prepared 6 more powerpoint slides covering all this weeks teaching. This means I can carry on real lectures the next few days as I can print out the ppt stuff for the lost students. It will also be useful to give to Narasimha so he knows what I have done. He told the students that they must not worry if they do not understand me because he will repeat it all later. Viji told me later that they understand me better than him as he uses overhead projector and they cannot keep up. I finished my last slide as Charlie arrived with Teena to collect me for dinner. We three drove on his motorbike very gently through the back ways to his home. It feels strange to be there without the father who died this year [and whose funeral dinners I paid for; provided for large number of people on 11th and 40th days after death]. I had loaned Charlie 100,000 to buy some land but he asked if instead he could have half to pay this. Charlie is feeling guilty about this but is pleased he will be able to pay back the rest this year [30,000 tomorrow and remaining 45,000 in June]. It turns out that he is a good friend of Rajendra, the new VC [he taught flute to his son]. Teena is as sweet as before but Stephen is a bit sad. He hardly said anything all evening which is apparently typical as he only talks to Teena. He sat furiously copying out some Hindi homework then ate in silence then just sat staring into space.

Charlie told me some worrying news. Thumulagunta was developed by a politician of the Telugu Desam party and in the deal was a clause that said the government could take it back if needed for something critical. Now the ruling party is Congress and they say they need it back. This would mean the relocation of all the people there to some distant place with equivalent land etc, and demolition

and development of the whole area. It is likely to take years to get through the courts and may never happen.

Successfully rejecting another bike ride I requested an auto so had slightly less dangerous ride home where I watched the 2nd of Puccini's one act operas – Suor Angelica; very beautiful but sad.

Wednesday 23rd Jan. Had horrible night interrupted by my coughing; finished one of the 2 novels I bought in Heathrow []. Could not cope with a walk especially as it was rather cloudy and humid so continued with my history of cancer [finished later in the day]. Only 4 students today [Suresh “has some problem sir”] but enjoyable and not too irritating as I am committed to preparing all my lectures as powerpoint which can be printed off. Found someone (Rao) to drive me home for beaker of tea. Lunch was dull fried rice with raita and a packet of peanuts which when mixed with it was rather good. Charlie turned up at lunch time with the rupees. I spent rest of day doing powerpoint. Continued into the evening as I did not want to go coughing and snivelling into town and have no appetite anyway. Crisps, Mars bar and perhaps breakfast bar should keep me going while I watch a film [Under suspicion; Gene Hackman and Morgan Freeman]. Tried to phone home but got answering machine. Had nice long chat with Gopi earlier and 4 phone calls through the day from “Chris sir, friend sir Barath Kumar sir”. As that is all the English he knows I do not know if there was any real message there.

Goodnight all.

Thursday 24th January. Only one cough and read break in the night resulting in waking with stiff neck and headache but that might have been caused by being woken at 7.00 by Manohar. He is student who was best virology student last year but taught in Telugu medium schools so his main communication was by enthusiastic smiling. He brought me a present of what looked like small dry samosas containing sweet nutty stuff inside, bought while out jogging; they went well with my beaker of tea. I have finished the serious book about science of cancer so have graduated to David Attenborough's excellent autobiography [life on air]. Requested no breakfast and went for a walk up past pig research place and back by way of NCC nagar lake. They have cut back so much of the small trees and undergrowth so many of my favourite places have fewer birds. But saw a coucal pompously cross the path ahead of me and then saw an immature or female [brown] paradise flycatcher, so they have not abandoned us. At the lake I must have approached slightly differently as the white fronted kingfisher did not fly away and I got the best pics ever, with good front view then beautiful turquoise back. While looking at it I saw a very large bird fly out of a tree on the far side; I assumed it must be a grey hornbill but it came back into the tree and I could later identify it as a Crested Hawk Eagle [also called Changeable Eagle]. My pics are not good because it was always hiding its head as it groomed itself but a small video is better. It is apparently common in broad leaved forest and lives on small birds and animals and is well known for taking chickens, so it had found a good place on campus for this.

I was collected for my lecture in good time by Praveen so had time to chat with Anthony Johnson who is now a very fat post doc. Numbers up to 6 with a new boy. I gave them a pendrive with my powerpoint summary of lectures so far. Narasimha called in to tell me he would not be lecturing today so I could have more time which was nice as I could go a bit slower and finish the main thermodynamics section.

Tomorrow is Mohammed's birthday so a holiday. So I arranged that they come to the guest house at the normal lecture time of 11.0. Suresh borrowed one of the girls' scooter and gave me a lift home. On the way we were overtaken by a bike driven by Suman [Thumulagunta tall and lean who was missing last visit]; he indicated that he would deliver his friend and return to see me at guest

house. There seems to be a problem with lunch now – they can only provide fried rice plus a packet of something [nut yesterday and some crunchy junk today. Not satisfactory. I ate half of it and stopped as I expected Suman. He did not come and I put myself to sleep with some chocolate. Had bucket shower, a read on the roof with tea then set off at 4.15 for country walk out beyond Upparapalli check point. The traffic queue for the rail crossing stretched all the way back to the guest house so I walked over the rail track beside the guest house and went the back way. What used to be a rough track by my 2nd village of Upparapalli is now a big fast road. The check point is a virtual one I think on the big dual carriageway bypass which I cross and then walk through small village to the countryside. I guess I have become accustomed to the friendliness of the people on my usual walks and in Thumulagunta and was surprised by the more usual dull stares with no response when I said hello. Once in the country people did wave and I think they are the people I have seen there the last few years. This is the place I have previously seen black winged kite and rosy starling but nothing special today except for a pair of rollers on a telephone line; good news. After about a kilometre on the way home I was lucky enough to get an auto for the very long slog home. He wanted 70 rupees but I put him down to 60 but was so pleased I gave him 70 anyway.

As I arrived I was met by three of the students together with a new one. So had an exhausting chat plus some photos. There was a lot of surreptitious ?? chat and one of them left to come back ten minutes later with a poly bag stuffed with cut pieces of papaya, sold from grubby little carts by the road nearby. They wanted none so I had to graciously eat a small bowl of it; the rest, which was most of it, was jettisoned over the roof later. After they left I walked most of the way to town then auto to S. park for kaju/gobi and roti, and choc ice cream. As I had eaten tiny breakfast and very small lunch I was hungry enough to enjoy this although it was ridiculously spicy, using up most of the paper napkins from my table. Time to stop to watch opera [Puccini Gianni Schicci]. Goodnight.

Notes

Dr Hema nice lady virologist. Narasimha virology lecturer but a microbiologist responsible for microbial physiology course.

Piamoda Kumari small [said to be nasty] microbiologist.

Lakshman is new student of Dr Hema. He is the good bike driver.

VC is prof Najendra. Prof of zoology co-supervisor of Subbu and supervisor of Subbaiah.
AND personal friend of flute Charlie.

New gursthouse staff and brother of Venu is Dilly raju

Virology Previous students:

Viji Vijayan – married to srinivasulu's last phd student. And Paaaaarvani

Boys p. venkateswarlu, Suresh, Mallikarjuna

Final year microbiology met in hostel b block 302 Reddy prakash and hari krishna

Village

Manoj kumar visited Sunday [bit pushy showoff]. Brother of honey shree with Barath's younger brother Ganesh

Mounish and bobby [11] are brothers.

Barath = balu [his 'cute' name].

Balachandra is brother of dinesh whose father Nagaraju works in guest house.

Village game of old ladies is called dayalu. The stick game is Gilam kodi