

INDIA DIARY 2007



January 12th – February 27th 2007

Chris and Elizabeth Anthony



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This visit is special; Libby came for first part of visit. Much of first part was written by her; this is written in italics.

Sat 13th Jan. I was woken on Friday by L at 5.25 as my alarm had not gone off. In 7 minutes we were on our way, by taxi [English Rose collection]. The journey to Heathrow was 75 min and we checked in easily with both cases being only 23 kg. That is partly because I had my computer plus about 10 kg of photo stuff etc in my rucksack. We then had 2 hours to wait which was extended to 5 hours as the flight was delayed. John Prabakhar phoned to check we were catching our plane ok so I had to apologise and tell him he would have to wait up all night for us. I have known John for many years. I met him when he was 18 in Chennai and he visited us in UK a few times. In spite of the circumstantial evidence he says “no uncle, I am not a smuggler, I am working in Import /Export; I am good friend of police and politicians etc”. We arrived in Chennai at 4 in morning to be met by one of John’s friends with a sign saying Dr CHRIS, before immigration. He led us past the queues, pushing to the front - before the row of wheelchair users. Then of course we had a long wait for luggage. We were soon met by John who had a broken leg in plaster, ignoring the advice of his doctor who said he should not walk. We were adorned with fancy silver garlands instead of flowers and cloaked in sheets of green and orange silk before being bundled into a new red Toyota Corolla belonging to one of John’s police assistants. *Liz noted that he was particularly young and handsome.* He drove through the night streets of Chennai and 50 km out to the Golden sun Beach Resort 3km north of Mahabalipuram. Instead of the usual Tamil film music we had a tape of old gospel songs from the Billy Graham era: Blessed Assurance; Great is thy faithfulness etc. Of course the streets were empty [relatively] and the car was comfortable and safe, giving me the most relaxed pleasant drive I have ever had through Chennai. All the time I was thinking what a wonderful peaceful introduction to India for Libby. Her diary: *The drive through the outskirts of Chennai and onto the East Coast road I will never forget; our driver hooted at everything in the road, near the road or even parked within site of it. He weaved in and out of the traffic- bikes, rickshaws, cars, cows and lorries, passing through gaps that were only half the width of the car; it was probably the worst drive in my life.* At the Golden Sun they eventually found our names among their scraps of paper and we went off to our poolside cottage room No. 16. Very soon we were in bed just as the sun was hinting at rising.

In the afternoon we went the long walk in the sun along the beach into Mahabalipuram; tea at the Luna Magica then on rocks around the shore temple area to watch the sunset amongst the happy crowds and horse riders. The boys in separate groups from the girls all paddling fully dressed. Little clusters of nuns sitting on shore eating ice creams. As a concession to the strangeness of everything we had dinner in posh Heritage veg hotel before getting auto back to Golden Sun. *Libby notes the mix of tourists, beggars, tea stalls souvenir sellers all trying to scrape a living, including a little family living on a pile of tsunami wreckage, cooking on a little fire and baby wrapped in rags, sleeping on a sheet of cardboard.*

Sun 14th Of course we started in the open restaurant with breakfast of puri masala, feeling so strange and nice with Libby beside me instead of my usual thought of her at home and how much she would like it here. While sitting reading under the palm roofed open shelter on the beach two gentle thin hands from behind were put over my eyes, easily identified as belong to Madhu. It was so good to see him, as slim and dignified as ever, holding me, muttering chris, chris. He had knocked on the door of the room, and stood smiling at Liz “I am Madhu”. We staggered along the beach toward Chennai with him hanging round my neck every now and then as if to stop me going off. He has just finished his work learning AutoCad design in Chennai and would return next day to his family in Bangalore. In the afternoon we all caught an auto into M where Madhu went off to find a bus back to Chennai. It felt so risky to let him go after meeting for such a short time. We then did a proper tourist visit – we climbed over the rocks above the

great Anjuna's Penance – part of what is now a World Heritage site one of the greatest rock carvings in the world. Again it was so nice to share my love of the place with Liz, the heat and monkeys and goats and hordes of tidily uniformed school children clambering with us. They invented questions to ask for their entertainment or education. *The girls in red uniform, in bare feet with large long thick plaits of hair swinging down their backs.* In the evening we spent a short time watching some of the outdoor dance festival but were put off settling there because of the threat of mosquitoes.

Mon 15th. In the morning we strolled up the beach to the next hotel - the Silver Sands - where we had tea in their very up-market restaurant, Liz attracting the waiter more than I ever did. Took his photo standing proudly beside her. John Prabakar turned up for lunch with his broken leg and police driver. He brought a load of newspaper cutting showing his pictures with Polish ministers etc. He is Chairman and founder of the Indo-Polish chamber of commerce in Chennai and was recently given a great honour – the Polish Chevalier honour. One reason was that he arranged the release of four polish hostages up in Nepal. How did he do that I wonder. I guess he used his network of friends [including gangsters?]. He also helped Polish people in channelling their aid after the tsunami of 2 years ago. As always he was great company. He was very enthusiastic for us to visit his family in Chennai; it appears he is married with two daughters. He would tell us nothing about them, saying that we would meet them later. As it turned out we could not contact him on our trip to Chennai on Libby's way home so we are none the wiser. On the beach in the afternoon we were approached by a scrawny coconut seller who was driven away by the hotel security man. As he trudged away we saw him pull a mobile phone from his lungi to chat to other beach sellers I guess.

Tues 16th. When we checked out of Golden Sun we found that John had paid all our bills. We had a pleasantish drive the Kanchipuram route to Tirupati, with the same nice car and Libby's handsome young driver. *The usual attractive cows with decorated horns, rice fields, lorries and carts laden with sugar cane, palm trees, little thatched houses, red brick works - bricks dug direct out of ground and then dried in high piled kilns, children everywhere, people going to temple with ladies hair braided with flowers . At one point a string of children across the road tried to bar our route to ask us for money [a Pongal festival tradition]. Although terrified they stood there until we nearly ran them over.* It felt so strange passing through the ever-growing outer part of Tirupati with Libby beside me. We arrived in time for lunch at the guest house. The Vice-Chancellor has taken over my nice special room and so we have a 1st floor room. We got to like this very much. At first this was a great disappointment to me because I had decided last year that Liz must come after they decorated and re-furbished it so perfectly the year before. She was wonderful and set about cleaning and organising so that we fit in very well. Under her guidance we entered camping mode. It turned out to be as good although much more cramped. It is conveniently opposite the flat roof with sun and shade provided by the tall Ashok trees, with chipmunks, babblers and drongos. Imran soon turned up and took us down town to buy towels, bedsheets etc. Libby found Ghandi road terrifying – it was busier with bikes and auto traffic than usual. Fortunately later she got to like it. Her description: *Ghandi road was like a nightmare – bikes, scooters, cows, calves, goats, oxcarts, cars, buses, people, people, people, all in the dark making me feel very vulnerable. Glad to get into auto for ride home. Even then in Nethaji road a boy on a bike rode in front of us so we had to stop violently and wait while the furious driver jumped out and hit the boy round the head. He just stood there accepting this, looking proud.* All this time I was feeling euphoric, back in my second home, so pleased to be sharing it with Libby and completely insensitive to the fact that she was desperate to go home.

We eventually set up our room with new bathroom mat, mosquito spray, extension leads, bedside light, towels, bedsheets.

Wed 17th. Visited university and shown round department with the Head of Department Sai Gopal who I had taught as an MSc botany student in 1982. Met Sateesh and other students including Subramanian on campus. We had to avoid the wild bees around their huge nest on the ceiling of the stairwell. Then went to look at loads of cockroaches and swarms of tiny ants outside. Met crazy professor in guest house who gave us the first of many of his small books. In

the evening we ate in very cold Kalyan Residency hotel - veg thali. Libby of course comments in her brief diary notes so many things that I have become accustomed to: at the guest house the regular very noisy trains hooting and grinding their long way past us up to the level crossing; the small shrine to Sri Venkateshwara at bottom of stairs in guest house with its gently continuous Om Om Om droning up the stairs to us. We went to Thumulagunta village by auto after a long wait at level crossing in queues of bikes cycles cars buses lorries carts autos rickshaws lining up to fight across as soon as gates were lifted. When we arrived we were seen by boys who know my friend Balaji so they took us to his house where red plastic chairs were found for us in their little courtyard and cokes brought; news spread fast and friends and family soon arrived with hordes of children to be entertained. Then Balaji arrived looking bigger and heavier and even darker for great reunion. I had printed some pics so these were all passed round, grabbing at my great art. This was followed by usual photographic marathon, Liz indoors recording all girls and ladies, all jabbering and jockeying for best place to sit on bed for photos by and with Liz. The pushy ladies went to put on new saris for second photos and a tiny 2 month baby was brought in. I had a more relaxed time outside with the boys, many remembered from past years, still fighting, and tearing a nice home-made paper kite in the process. Liz's nerve broke first and we set off home with Balaji fending off our tiresome disciples. Fortunately Kotyk [young friend from last year] arrived just before we left - nice to see him again. We thought that we had finally escaped when across the paddy field we saw a crowd of children all running across to get a final photo.

Thurs 18th. Went by car up to Tirumula temple in hills. From Liz: *Our car with serious young driver called Hanuman [monkey god] arrived one hour early at 8.30. We had breakfast of bread omelette [omelette with damp toast]. Set off through Tirupati – first visit in daylight - very impressed by crowds and scooters with whole families on them - mum dad and two or more children, people sleeping in street, goats, buffalo and cows and calves. After leaving town had long wait in sun at a security checkpoint. Searched my bag but only seriously interested in plastic bag of wipes eventually got pass and tickets to show at many points on way up long winding single track road up into mountains with views over Tirupati and monkeys to cheer us on. As the whole area of seven hills is holy there were signs threatening 25 rupee fines for spitting, smoking, drinking, urinating in public. Chris wondered if he could knock up 100 rupees by doing all at same time. We eventually arrived at top and parked by coaches, jeeps bikes trucks all loaded with pilgrims. So many crowds with many men in black with ash painted faces. Many groups were directed by ladies in bright orange saris with big badges. All a bit like a Hindu copy of New Wine meetings with bare-footed families enjoying the day out. Many pilgrims had shaven heads, having donated hair to the god, and were yellow painted or covered in thick knitted balaclava helmets. On the long steps near the sanctuary was a an area with burning stuff on brass pedestals and pilgrims breaking coconuts on stones there. Girl students later explained it represented breaking the hardness of their hearts before visiting the god. Similar to ceremonial washing in the huge temple tank. It was less crowded than previous year when I waited 6 hours while Madhu queued to see his god [not like our instant access]. This year the caged queues of pilgrims sometimes even had to run to catch up. Again it was so nice to experience it with Libby. Took loads of photos, including groups of black-clad hairy bearded devotees who lined up like cricket teams for us [their request, not ours].*

Fri 19th went for my favourite local walk near pig research place where all the best birds came to see Libby: golden orioles, babblers, mynahs, drongos, green bee eaters, doves, crested bulbuls, iridescent sunbirds, Indian robins. And of course plants – hibiscus, bourgainvilleas, acacias, jasmine, flame of forest trees, all with the pink background escarpment at the edge of the seven holy hills, and few clouds and cool breeze. In the afternoon took Libby down to University to meet the girl students. Their hostel is in University campus, surrounded by high walls and guarded by uniformed security. No men allowed in and gates are locked at 6.30. She was very nervous about going off on her own. I assured her that from my experience in the men's hostels she would have too much help in finding her friends. This turned out to be true with the first person she asked taking her over. Having escaped she had a great time of course: *Jyothi took me to here room, just big enough to take 4 beds lined side by side with all belonging in open lockers*

on wall which had words of wisdom stuck on it. Other friends including Rahamath and Anusha arrived, eventually the room filling with 12 microbiology students, all in beautiful coloured saris, telling their names, their native places, and their plans for the future. Rahamath and Anusha lived in room with 2 other girls next door, having only 3 beds one slept on floor. The beds are just sheet metal with a cloth and often no mattress, making our Spartan guest house room look luxurious. On the way out we passed a communal TV room crowded with students watching Telugu or Hindi 'neighbours'. Meanwhile, I was left outside with the evening mosquitoes but had the great experience of meeting old student friends including Subramanian again.

In the evening we visited Sai Gopal's family. He collected us at 6.30 to take us by auto. His house is part of a 3 story block with clean tiled floors and many rooms including prayer room. We went up to roof to see Tirupati at night with all flat roofs taken up with groups of children doing their extra tuition or homework. SG's wife is small, quiet and very sweet. The two daughters are large but also sweet – aged 14 and 16. The younger is confident and chatty and wants to be an aeronautical engineer, while the older is more reserved rather dull looking and wants to be a neurologist. A 12 year old boy cousin then came in to sit on the floor doing his homework. We had a wonderful veggie meal of aubergine curry and beans and chappatis and curds. I went and chatted with the younger daughter [chendu] and cousin about their plans and their computer. We then came home in auto at night amongst the bikes with no lights and cows and crowds, the autodriver weaving between them all, knowing his width to the last cm.

Saturday 20th. *Went by car to Imran's home at Kaddapah, about 130km away on a well-made road. Started in early morning rush hour with many kids in their uniforms on way to school. Then out through the countryside with miles of scrub and then papaya, mango and banana plantations, then sunflowers, sugar, rice paddies and all the time cows and goats. We passed through many small villages and towns, all with their temples mosques and churches. We stopped just before Kadappa for me to have a pee and make a call to Imran to direct the driver to a place where we were met by Imran plus friend on a motorbike which we followed to his house. Through tiny mud-packed back streets, negotiating house steps, bikes, tractors, goats, buffalo to a rough open area with Imran's house. Met Imran's mum and friend then went on roof to look at birds: loads of black kites, drongos and bee eaters on telephone wires. In the distance could see 3 mosques [Kadappah is 75% muslim] and separate Christian and Muslim burial grounds, and a water tank with women beating the dirt out of their clothes on the steps. I sat in the kitchen while Imran's mum finished getting lunch we then ate in stages; first Imran's friend, Chris and me, then mum with Imran, then the driver, then the maid. Roast [Indian] chicken, curried aubergine, fresh-made chapattis, rice curds, very spicy prawn crackers all wahed down with Fanta. Then the bizarre experience of watching Mr Bean on tele, but silent as the speakers were broken. After lunch we went in hot sun to local hotel with swimming pool. Imran and Chris swam with other men and boys while I sat enviously [and a bit resentfully I think] watching, looking at flowers and giant lizard. We went back in the evening so that Libby could go to church with the girls the following day. Had dinner in Kalyan residency –veg biryani dahl ice cream. I woke in the night with stomach cramps then diarrhoea.*

Sunday 21st Jan. *Next morning Lib had gut rot so church today and our plan to go to Gopi's village on Monday had to be cancelled. Libby lay on bed all day. Crazy professor kept calling in with gifts of fruit, pills, curds and curry sandwich. The pills I hid, the fruit I ate next day and the curry went in the bin. At 4.00 5 of the students came and sat on Chris's bed and chatted [their favourite occupation; 1 hindu, 1 muslim, 3 christian].*

Gopi came in the afternoon and it was nice to see him meet Libby. We abandoned her and had dinner at Sundiri Park with Subramanyam, who told me before how much he likes Gopi when we met up together last year. It is nice for Gopi that he does not have to work hard at English all the time. We then checked him into the Kalayan Residency. The rooms are excellent and cost about £10 a night.

Monday 22nd Jan. Libby had a more comfortable night and was a bit better in the morning but still rather fragile. She had breakfast of curds and guava – courtesy of crazy prof. I went to collect Gopi who had had a good night. I asked if the bed was more comfortable than at home but he sleeps on the floor there. We had breakfast room service. Very good. *Libby: while Chris was seeing gopi off I wandered around grounds and up to the level crossing. In afternoon walked down to virology Department but girls had gone so I went to hostel and had more long chats with microbiology/virology/biochemistry students [18 of them]. Took photos and explained English sayings. Muslim/Christian/hindu ratio was 1:4:6. Discussed marriage [they want max of 2 children]. J, M & S [?] walked me to the autos by the gate to come home to guest house. Anousha paid then they all ran beside the auto as I drove away. As I went into the hostel I went in on my own and was picked up by a girl in jeans who took me on a short cut to my friends by way of the cellar and the mess hall where they were preparing supper; she is a psychology student who wants to come to London to study or get job. In the evening we went for a stroll in Ghandi road where I bought mugs for C & B. then home for scrabble and bed.*

Tuesday 23rd Jan. *Hot and sunny. Went to dairy farm, bird watching in morning then back to sit on roof to read. Surya's sister Swarna arrived with husband and Daryanche – small son. We gave presents. A bit fell off the toy lorry – should have got stronger one. Had simple lunch in guest house then back on roof to read about Modern India. After 4.00 tea we went for more beautiful birds to Agric college part of campus where we met small boys, curious students and monkeys, running along the high yellow/black blocks on side of road. Home to change and then by auto down to station. We crossed the line and went past hundreds of pilgrims, beggars and buses to Surya's home where we met Susai and arranged car for Thursday. Returned by auto for scrabble and bed.*

Wednesday 24th *Last day in Tirupati. Cold has developed more but not too disabling. Went by auto to the zoo. Silly man went the very long way round through Tirupati. Went hunting for leopards, tigers, lions and saw many nice birds on way, and huge baboons and gigantic toad. Chris insisted driver went the direct way home, taking half the time. As tummy still not settled had lunch of biscuits fruit and chocolate. After short sleep I read on the roof while 17 workers put concrete onto roof of extension building. Some mixing, others heaving up onto roof and others smoothing the wet concrete. They did the whole thing in one day which was noisy but there was some respite over their lunch break. In the afternoon went for lovely walk in dairy farm where we watched hindu priest curing a sick slaverling cow. They put a lungi over its back then garlands of flowers round its head, praying all the time. Sai Gopal later told us "yes it most definitely works". They don't put sick cattle down apparently. Saw many beautiful birds including tree pies, grey wagtail and scarlet minivet. Chris worked out I have seen more than 40 new species. [This inspired my work as the group naturalist in Nkunga, Africa]. Later went by auto down to Lutheran church. Returned to change, say goodbye to Sai gopal who turned up and then back down town for dinner at Kalyan and a last stroll through backstreets and temple area. Bought a lock [Hugh had broken the garage lock] and belt and bag for Chris. Auto home, exhausted.*

Thursday 25th. Time for Libby to be posted back home. We had a nice early start, Sai Gopal coming to say goodbye just as we were leaving. Nice silly man tried telling our driver to go by way of Chandragiri fort but I managed to cancel that when I found what he was doing. Fortunately Libby was over her problem so the journey was not too bad. The new driver, Arjun, started inauspiciously by going the Renigunta route instead of the nice rural short cut. It seems he wanted to take us to a friend who expected us to get out and have tea with him. He was some sort of social worker and Christian pastor and I got the impression we were supposed to have some discussion leading to financial support. We had a really good journey until we hit the Poonamallee high road which was being rebuilt in parts. Instead of the 20 minute drive to the Breeze hotel we sat in clouds of hot red dust mixing it with autos huge trucks, buses and hooting

bikes. We alternated hot stationary periods with sudden lurches off the road onto the unmade dirt track to cheat and bypass some of the bigger lorries. An hour later we arrived at the Breeze hotel just in time for lovely lunch. *Lovely cool room with comfy beds and sheets. Had nice lunch of sizzly chicken then out for a stroll through nearby park and around the block; not very interesting. Arranged with driver that he should come next morning to take us to Trident hotel. We failed to get a response from John Prabaker so could not arrange our visit to his family. Called Rams' parents to arrange to see them to eat next day.*

Friday 26th. I woke in middle of night with a galloping gut. Glad it waited until we were in nice Breeze hotel with not much to challenge me. We had arranged for the driver Arjun to be available at 10 – 11 to take us to Trident –hilton but there was no sign of him. They kept calling him but they said he had left the hotel. The charming staff then solved the problem. For 340 rupees we had a neat new car to drive across Chennai. It is Republic day – celebrating the official adoption of the new Constitution in 1948. There was a little ceremony with soldiers and square bashing cadets to the tune of Colonel Bogey and a flag and prayers just outside the hotel lobby that Libby spied on. During the raising of the flag the row of white-clothed cooks forgot to take off their tall hats. Perhaps Republic day is why there was so little traffic and we had a nice drive down Anna Salai (Mount Road), fortified by immodium, then out towards airport to 5* Trident-Hilton. Our driver turned up later and was delighted that we were not annoyed, as I gave him 200 rupees for expenses. The decision to go to Trident Hilton turned out to be excellent. As I was still enterically challenged it was good to be so safely cocooned away from the noise and dust and heat of Chennai. We had a lovely last day by the pool under the coconut palms with huge airliners climbing just about high enough to get over the roof of the hotel. *Had a blissful swim in pool then nice read, surrounded by smooth lawns, hibiscus and coconut palms. An enthusiastic chap tried to lure us into the gym but settled for a pot of tea – frequently replenished while chris slept in room. Had simple lunch.*

We were supposed to have visited Ramachandran's home – near Radakrishnan Rd this evening but I was too fragile so they enthusiastically agreed to visit us, meeting in the lobby and having tea in the lobby café. They were of course charming and good fun and delighted to hear our praise of Ramachandran who is of course easy to be enthusiastic about. They did not know of Libby's prohibition of more idols so gave us a 24 carat gold Peepal leaf with Sei Venkateswara at its centre. More acceptable [to Libby] was the box of Indian sweets. The price was another bag of sweets to be taken to Ramachandran. As I was feeling better I had a standard thin pizza and L had a spaghetti. Then off to sleep for a few hours before being taken in Hilton car to airport 5 minutes drive away. No entrance was allowed to non-passengers so had a quick goodbye and back to horribly empty room in Hilton leaving Libby to the slow sad slog through the system. *I quickly went through passport control and security and am sitting writing this while waiting for plane. Plane full of screaming kids all way home so used own earplugs and listened to Marriage of Figaro for 3 hours. Uninteresting food. Pressure on ears as we descended was very painful. Passage through immigration etc all very smooth. Met by Jim Leppard, loyally coming early in morning to meet me although he was ill. Had very quiet strange drive home on clean orderly empty roads. Then feeling very disoriented covered sitting room with stuff from my suitcase. Understand now Chris's disorientation on arriving home. I found my deafness was imagined; I could hear the birds singing – it was just the relative silence of Oaklands way compared with Tirupati.*

Saturday 27th. After parting from Libby a lonely drive back to Trident hotel. I then managed more blissful sleep and up again just in time to respond to a phone call from reception to say Madhu had arrived. We went down to have our free breakfast; mine was cake and croissants while Madhu did about three circuits of the buffet. He had cut his foot the day before and had on a rather dirty bandage so could not go swimming so we decided to set off at 10.0 to Tirupati. I dreaded a similar horrible trip through Poonamallee high road as on our arrival but it was very quick and we were back in time for an excellent Guest house lunch (there were special guests and

so we had freshly cooked quality food). With Madhu sitting smiling at me continuously I converted our room into my bachelor pad for the next four weeks, including a thorough sweeping [taken over by Madhu] and furniture rearrangement. We both slept through the afternoon and set off down town to do shopping and eat. I suddenly felt a gut twinge so we went direct to Sinduri Park for early dinner (snacks only so had dosas). It was a false alarm so enjoyed food and went through very noisy Nethaji Road station area where we bought a 5m electric cable extension and a small table lamp. Then back to guest house for a nice long chat with Madhu lying grinning in his lungi. He had earlier casually mentioned that he had a job. It was the first he had applied for in Bangalore but had not mentioned it before as he had one further interview (after 2 interviews and an exam). It is with SOBHA developers. His job is to do with design and fitting of water systems/ plumbing etc in buildings being erected. He has 67 people working beneath him. He earns 12,000 rupees/ month and has a motor bike for his work, including crash helmet. So the 5000 rupees I lent (gave) for his course paid off. His previous job only paid 5,000 rupees a month. While chatting he commented on my new friend – a huge cockroach sitting on the lungi hanging at end of bed. It was waving its antennae around in a very thoughtful way – planning to take over the world I think.

Sunday 28th Jan. In the last ten days I have been only just warm enough with Libby having the fan on all night. Last night Madhu turned the fan off and put his jeans back on as he was so cold. He rejected bread omelette but I enjoyed it. Then he was off to get the bus back to Bangalore (6 hours). He was rather sad that he can only come on Sundays now whereas last year he could come a couple of times a week (3hrs from Rajampet). I will now have to defend Sundays from Imran [he can come anytime almost]. At last I was in my room to collapse into a typical Sunday. Washed 4 shirts etc, tidied up and walked to Thummalagunta with only a [hidden] small camera. Every lamppost in the central reservation from the dairy farm down to the Balaji Colony has a huge poster on it carrying the picture of the Chief Minister's son. He visited today and they had some ceremony up by the Thummalagunta road temple – with a makeshift auditorium made up of awnings and tents about 20 yards down the road. Already half full (2 hour before). It was slightly cloudy with a coolish breeze. I managed a sneaky entrance into the village with just 2 girls running up to take me to Balaji's house where I accepted tea but was given coffee. Had a nice chat with him, but still Venkataramana was away somewhere. I walked back the long way afterwards past the Women's University and back to nice simple lunch with Prof MahaVedan who wants me to co-edit a book on great Indian Scientists. Had a good read of Amartya Sen's book *The Argumentative Indian* in the sun then a shortish stroll in evening cool in University grounds near NCC Nagar. After creeping quietly through low bushes I stumbled into a clearing where there was a boys cricket match which of course stopped immediately for me to photograph the team [Photo Uncle!]. The boys were [I guess] the sons of university staff and spoke fair English. Saw a new type of Shrike, tree pie and female golden oriole. As soon as I got back Sai Gopal and Satheesh turned up to plan my work after which I went nervously on Satheesh's bike to his room in a house near the Women's university. Having dutifully admired his new computer we went to the Adithi restaurant which is open but had changed ownership. Libby would not have liked it as it is dark and has a few mosquitoes and the tables had the usual wiped and smeared surfaces. I am sticking to veg food now so had alloo gobi masala, paneer and chapattis. So home to an early night after this. Listening to Paul Lewis playing Beethoven Waldstein Sonata. Imran just rang trying to get me to let him come next Saturday night, sulking a bit when I wouldn't tell him what I was doing. So I chatted for about 15 minutes and cheered him up.

Beethoven has just triumphantly finished and so shall I.

Monday 29th Jan. Had a poor night last night, woken with stiff neck at 3.0 and then couldn't sleep. As it was 9.30 pm in UK I tried to call Clive but failed then successfully called Leigh and had a nice chat. He has just been promoted so is becoming convinced that perhaps he is successful. He told me that minus 10 degrees is forecast for next week. We are still 30 deg in day and 20 at night. I am writing this at 9.30 evening irritated by a 1 cm insect bite under my knee. It is unscientifically ignoring the antihistamine. I wonder if it is something more than a single mosquito and will spray the room tomorrow. I gave my introductory lecture chat to new 1st year

students. They were very chirpy and will be fun to teach. I was introduced as usual by Sai Gopal with a new stock of silly comments. He said that I was a Fellow of the Royal Society and a Commonwealth Fellow and had written several papers in international journals (104 actually) and had about ten research students (35) so on balance I suppose it was about right. I was whisked back by Chandra to guest house to prepare the afternoon lecture to final year microbiologists – on industrial microbiology, continuous culture etc. I thanked the girls again for looking after Libby so well and invented a suitable message from her. Many of the boys I knew better are virology students and so were not in the class. The two microbiologists I knew well [Nissar and Srinivas] were absent. There was some problem in the university recently so the students were sent home for an extended holiday and now are back making up for lost time by working on Sunday and tomorrow which is a Muslim festival. Prof Srinivasulu is now back so had a nice chat about his son's wedding to which I am invited. Spent the afternoon preparing my molecular biology lectures in the sun and ate at the Athidi again, this time with Subramanyam and his cousin brother who speaks very little English and is doing BSc biology [in Telugu] at the SV college. Subamanyam came back for a short time and then went off to prepare his lecture for tomorrow. It has been a lovely typical weekday, with no plans, sun and cloud and a coolish breeze.

Tuesday 30th. Woke early after a typical disturbed night and decided to avoid slobbering about by going for morning walk. My reward was great. As soon as I set out the morning cloud lifted from the hills and the morning pink sun-lit hills appeared. Saw golden orioles, hoopoes, tailor birds, yellow headed wagtail, and all the usual ones, while walking behind the pig research places. Bread omellete was good. My morning lectures are to Previous year – molecular biology – genetic code etc, and afternoon is continuous culture with final year students. Fortunately the girls including Anusha are lively and responsive. The boys are almost sulkily silent and only half of them seem to come. Out of the class they are friendly but they don't seem very motivated. I am really enjoying the new room, with its instant access to the sun at all times. This afternoon the electricians arrived and mended the air conditioning. It is too noisy to sleep with but it is cool anyway. In the day I leave it on when I am not there, so come in to a nice cool room. Last evening I had a couple of very irritating insect bites – about 1 cm across which seemed to be different from mosquitoes. I had also been irritated by marauding cockroaches so I went berserck with the insect spray which killed off a few cockroaches and I have had no more bites. In early evening I walked all the way down to Balaji colony to an internet café, where the standard charge is 15 rupees/hour [8p]. It is faster than last year and I was able to delete about 80 messages in 20 minutes. Nothing much was there except for a couple of requests to referee papers which I have said yes to. I had intended to eat in nearby Athidi but tum felt insecure so got auto to Sinduri park. The roads soon became clogged with autos and I got out before the temple and walked. The attraction was a special festival where they take the gods for a ride around the tank opposite the hotel. There were huge spindly wood and s string scaffolds supporting the gods made up of fairground lights. The steps around the tank gradually filled up with pilgrims, locals having a night out and the odd tourist. Fortunately I had bought by good camera and I took many photos and lots of video stuff. The brightly-lit gaudy gods are sat on a raft beneath a sort of gazebo and are towed around the tank with accompanying loudly amplified musicians and half naked priests waving flames over everyone. Slightly ahead of the god, on the steps, another procession of musicians did a sort of religious conga with more wild music. I had the usual groups of small boys wanting photos for which one of them wanted to reward me with a balloon or candy floss or other fairground stuff. I declined and eventually slunk down into the basement of the Sinduri restaurant where I read the Hindu while eating 2 rotis and their Sinduri special subji. This was rather too much and I felt a bit overblown but not enough to refrain from ordering a starberry icecream which mutated into the standard excellent butterscotch by the time it arrived. The grinning turbanned doorman let me out into the warm night where I wandered down Nethaji road to buy a second electric cable extension. Very cheap [less than £2 for 10 metres]. So I am now nicely organised with bedlight, music etc etc. I had intended writing this diary immediately on

returning but felt a bit gutty and tired so I gave in and lay on the bed listening to Britten's Peter Grimes, imagining a nice cool Suffolk seaside.

Wednesday, 31st Jan. Walk. Nothing. Walk. In the evening I walked out by Vet college and poultry research place where I was led by a bored security man to come and see the "ducks up the backside of the building". No accounting for taste. I also saw a mongoose going up the backside. This all occurred while chatting with Hugh who was enthusiastic about the job he is applying for. He always raises my morale – even if I did not need it. Earlier Clive phoned to chat and Libby had just sent a text to say it was his first day as a full policeman. He said the only difference will be that his mistakes will not be so generously forgiven, and he will have a slightly higher salary. He is becoming a useful adviser on photographic things. It always takes a little willpower to set off on walks but is always worth it. I couldn't face the Athidi restaurant as I have become sensitised by Libby's reaction to the way tables are 'washed' by smearing any spilt food evenly over the surface. So I took an auto down to Ghandi road to walk to Sinduri park again where there was more festival going on. This time they were taking the god for a stroll round the tank on a platform supported by heavy poles, carried by devotees and surrounded by musicians with the usual drums and wild oboes, priests waving flaming torches over everything and the conga dancers keeping everything lively. I collapsed into the restaurant to my usual table and the Indian Express for company while I ate my vegetable biryani which was very good. As usual I was disturbed by waiters and the other wandering assistants asking where I am from etc, while not understanding the answers. Came back by auto and wrote diary and loaded films onto computer accompanied by Angela Hewitt playing Bach 24 preludes and fugues.

Thurs 1st ~February.

Srinivas (final year student who has written a lot of emails during the year) eventually came to my lecture. I don't know where he has been. Afterwards he came out and muttered quietly that he would come to the guesthouse after classes at about 6.00. I am writing this while waiting [now 6.30]. this afternoon I did nothing much after my lecture but read on my roof terrace in the shade of the ashok trees. While there a family of children staying at the guest house, led by a 12 year old boy pestered me with the usual questions but they were nice and polite and amused by my attempts to say their names. Just now I thought that Srinivas had arrived but it was the family again "come to visit you uncle". So I showed them a few photos of our Christmas till they were bored and went away.

I had my usual disturbed night with my neck worse than usual. Finally got up about 7.30 and in spite of my previous resolve just slobbered about, checking my lectures till breadomellettetime. Satheesh has at last accepted that I do not like his driving and so now travels at half speed, which gives me a very nice trip into work. I did my usual thing with the final students setting some work – to do some calculations and plot graphs for continuous culture. When I asked if they would do this the girls all said of course but all the boys one by one [only 8 of them] said no they would not do it. Acyually they sat and looked blankly at me and then confessed that this means no. they did not say why but did say that they would reconsider it if I was setting the exam questions. Sad, but the girls are encouraging.

In the afternoon the 1st year students were very lively by comparison and shouted out the words I was occasionally hunting for – "adenine sir" "degenerate code" etc. They have asked me to give some lectures on my research which will be more fun than protein synthesis. They are a much larger class because they include microbiologists plus the new industrial microbiologists and the virologists. It takes about 10 minutes to mark the register. Met little Jyothi on the stairs this morning – as she is a final year virologist I am not teaching her. So I thanked her again and passed on thanks from Libby which pleased them all. After the morning lecture I sat in the sun [34 degrees in shade] preparing the afternoon protein synthesis lecture. Then I fell asleep on the bed, being woken for an excellent lunch by Suri; he had prepared a lot of special stuff for a lot of special I visitors so I even had a table cloth. Expecting Srinivas to visit this evening, I swept up the room after the afternoon lecture. As I nervously brushed a couple of dead cockroaches towards the door one came to life and scurried over my foot towards the bathroom; it had apparently been eating the one killed by my purge a couple of days ago. It later emerged from the

bathroom to get a direct blast from the spray which provoked intense rushing about in random directions and an eventual collapse upside down. It has stopped its guilt-provoking twitching and I can get it out. It is now 7.00 and still no Srinivas. I suppose I should wait a bit then I will eat in Kalyan. Susai phoned yesterday to say I should call in and pay my car bill. I have left it to accumulate to pay with credit card. Autoed down to the Tank to watch the god go walk about then on to pay Ravi for car (6,500 rupees for 4 days including fuel) and then a nice vegetable subji which I expected to be the usual non-identifiable muddle of muddy vegs but was stir fried baby sweet corn, peppers, carrots and mushrooms; lovely.

Friday 2nd. Had wonderful birdy walk, seeing almost all the common birds plus emerald green Leaf bird, paradise flycatcher, golden orioles and a golden backed woodpecker. After morning lecture went down to internet and downloaded a couple of papers to referee – one by Judith Klinman and the other by Mila and Mary. Both are very good but will need a bit of hard work. Had usual day except that no one called me for lunch, I fell asleep and was woken by Satheesh to go to my lecture. Suri the cook said I should hurry back at 3 and have my lunch. I did – together with about 20 others just arrived from Tirumula temple. In the evening I walked anticlockwise round dairy farm where I saw one of the peacocks actually displaying its tail. A young man came rushing over to me to tell to hurry and come so I obeyed and there he was doing his stuff. Later I had to take a photo also of Balaji Subramanyam and his family and promised to send a print. It turns out he lives on Nethaji road just near Surya's old house so I may call in some time. I probably ate too much lunch as when Imran arrived I had no appetite and a stomach ache [?stomache]. Imran was wearing an impressive dark blue kurta (?) and white pajamas. I sent him down on his bike to get some pizza and cake and then opened one of the BA wine bottles. Delicious. Called home and had a brief chat as Hugh and Stuart were arriving. Imran was his usual entertainment and accepted happily that he could not stay on Saturday night – Madhu is coming from Bangalore and Imran just takes over.

Saturday 3rd. I am writing this at 10.30 in evening waiting for Madhu having spent the day with no walk – except the hot walk back for lecture. There is still a good coolish breeze even with the 34 degree temperature. I had to bully Imran to get him sorted out to go to his friends sister's wedding, while trying to prepare my lecture. I called in to see the biochemists after my lecture and of course they were all at tea. Thayagaraju was back first so had a nice chat with him. He told me that he has put my name down as their senior scientific advisor for a biological chemists conference to be held here next November. I have some advice – don't do it. !,000 delegates in Tirupati. They called in some of the final year students who after introductions just stood there while I had the usual job of entertaining them. After a pleasant late afternoon on roof in the shade Imran turned up to have a shower and to change for the official bit of the wedding, then went off after arranging for Suri to bring us up 3 teas.

I had a typical daft social evening. Subramanyam was supposed to have called in yesterday after classes at 5.30 but he did not come. It turns out that his sandals had broken so he had to walk to another hostel to borrow some. So he said he would come this evening and we would go to Athidi for dinner. No sign of him at 7.10 so when Srinivas called and asked to come I said yes. He said he would be 10 minutes but it was an hour later when he arrived, came in, shyly chatted for 5 minutes and said his brother Mahesh was outside; he was. Together with 5 other students from the same hostel so in they came to get a lecture from me about Indian history. I am reading a great book called "The Argumentative Indian" which is a set of essays by Amartya Sen the nobel prize winning economist from North India (Bengal). One of his main topics is the damage the Hindu Nationalist party (BJP) is doing to India. When in power they even re-wrote the history books trying to make all Indian achievements due to Hindus. Fortunately this has alienated a lot of serious supporters. Two of the greatest influences on Indian history were Ashoka [who reigned during the 1000 year Buddhist period] and Akbar, the 16th Century Muslim emperor. Both had encouraged religious tolerance and were enthusiastic about the religious diversity of India. I have only just discovered that about AD 500 an Indian astronomer had first explained eclipses, had proposed that the earth rotates, that it goes round the sun, that things don't fall off because of a force (we call gravity). This was all recorded and passed on to

Arabia but the chief British Raj historian didn't believe it and claimed it was all copied from Copernicus, Newton etc. While I was lecturing to them about this Libby phoned using my cheap card and told me how the Saturday morning concert had gone well. After half an hour they went off leaving Srinivas who then took me down to Athidi for veg fried rice. He insisted on paying and also bought some take away stuff. He came back to the guest house for more quiet chat then left me with his little bag of food and his glasses. I rushed off out to give them to him only to find he was still there on the roof gazing at the moon. 20 minutes later he was back to tell me his brother was waiting over the road and was hungry so could he have his little bag. All this is in a quiet mutter, the only comprehensible bits being "thank you sir" "you are very kind sir" etc.

It is now 11.15 and no Madhu. The bus takes about 5 hours from Bangalore so have to allow some flexibility. At about 11.40 there was a sound of a bus stopping outside and a few moments later there was a grinning frozen Madhu in jeans and tee shirt, his sole baggage a toothbrush sticking out of his back trouser pocket. He quickly changed into a lungi and wrapped himself up in a blanket and we chatted in and out of sleep till about 1-0. *I am writing this Sunday night to the sound of Richard Strauss Rosenkavalier, probably the most purely beautiful music I know.* I slept very well, waking with very few aches – mainly because I was in bed a short time and so had no time to get stiff.

Sunday 4th Feb. I woke to the sight of a wrapped corpse with a thin arm waving out of it "hello chris welcome to Sunday with Madhu". There was no breakfast as suri cook was on holiday. So we had a nice slow getting up, looking at pictures of Christmas and holidays. Madhu had to get back to Bangalore by evening so we had brunch in Sinduri Park – wonderful Masala dosas for 25 rupees with sweet Lassi. By 11.30 it was very hot as we walked to the busy bus station where there were 3 grades of bus to Bangalore. I couldn't persuade Madhu to let me pay for the fastest and best (350 rupees instead of 250). So off he went, 12 hours after arriving, with promises that he would be here next Saturday night. His job sounds very good with excellent prospects in a big construction company, building deluxe high rise apartments, with good training programmes etc. I then drifted in the dusty heat through the huge bus station area and across the busy noisy road to the Fortune Kences posh hotel to say hello to Susai who had a relaxed spell and so could take me to coffee in the Veg restaurant where I was introduced to all his friends including one friend who is a "good follower of Jesus and who has just married in a love match". "So he has every reason to be happy then"; "O yes sir I have". As I sat down there was a gentle tap on my shoulder and there was smiling Ranesh – my nice waiter from last year. So I suppose I will have to eat in the veg restaurant next time I am there. Gopi phoned to say good morning and I asked if he would like to come to Mahabalipuram on my way home; "yes chris do you remember you told me last year that it was my turn". After my very nice coffee I wandered in the midday sun over the rail tracks to Surya's house where his huge smiling mum gave me sweet milky tea and dry toast. We arranged for me to go to dinner tonight and off I went through the big choudhary coach park, where there were some playful very young priest apprentices wanting photos and a man painting a huge sign [as in Naryan's the painter of signs]. Then over the bridge onto the station platform and out to the temple area, Ghandi road to Balaji colony where I collapsed gratefully into an auto "SV University guest house sir? You are our regular customer". So back to slump on a bed under the fan to guzzle half a bottle of luke warm thumbs up, left by Imran yesterday. After a short sleep I sat on the roof in the shade reading the Sunday Hindu, while being spied on by the children of the family who camp out by the new extension. After the second load of concrete they built a series of shallow cement barriers dividing the roof into big squares which they then filled with water – to allow the concrete to settle I was told. The children – the usual 2 girls and a slightly older brother- used the warm water as a paddling pool. They were a bit shy but the boy proudly told me his name. I later took a photo of them from the roof as they sat chatting down below and now I get sweet little waves when they see me. At 4.30 I went for a stroll in the evening light over behind the pig pens then further out towards the hills, eventually losing my way, stumbling out eventually through goat paths beside the Virology department and a 20 minute walk home where I drank about a litre of water with an orange. Saw very few birds [hoopoes and golden orioles] but had an interesting conversation with 3 postgraduates as they came out of the Vet

college Virology building near the horse field. Had a nice chat with Leigh who is beginning to get stressed with the planning of wedding. They have decided on some music – Leigh has chosen some pop song and Steve has chosen Bruckner's 4th Symphony [the romantic]. That should be dramatic. I hope he didn't choose it just for the name – it is not that sort of romantic. I am rationing my wonderful new book [Sacred Games by Vikram Chandra] but felt I deserved an hour of reading before staggering out again to walk to ~University entrance to get an auto to the station so that I could walk through the Choudary area to Suryas. I really love that walk with the relaxed atmosphere of the travellers safely arrived and exploring their new homes. I came across a problem when I decided I should give a few coins to a beggar - when he held out a leprosy stump for money – where do you put it. I hurried past on the other side of the road as it were. At Surya's, Vinod's younger brother turned up "for darshan". He is now 18, very thin and dark with thick glasses and a wispy moustache covering his nice shy smile. He explained that he wants to be a doctor for which he is studying for a year – in the SV University college doing 'coaching' for entrance to medical school. About 50% of the students do well enough to get entrance. I had phoned Susai to suggest he comes to Surya's which he did [Surya's mum had had the same idea]. We had good simple dinner 2 chapatis with gobi and potato followed by a sweet rice and cardomam dish and some sweet orange semolina stuff. I was then very grateful for a lift home on Susai's bike through the cold air which suddenly hit as we left Balaji colony by the start of the University campus.

Monday 5th Feb. *I'm writing this while listening to Paul Lewis playing Beethoven Pathetique sonata.* I slept well after my heavy walking holiday yesterday but of course was still woken by the 6.30 train and the subsequent race of released traffic from the level crossing. As I was forcing myself up to go for a walk I realised I had not really prepared today's lectures so did that instead. It is more difficult this year as I am doing the whole of molecular biology which I don't carry in my head like my old microbial physiology. Suri soon knocked with my two sweet teas presented with big smiles and head wobbling enough to cause me envy with my seized up neck. I think my exercises are working as I have a wider range of movement I think. I was feeling a bit dull [as they say here] but a wander round my roof and the morning view of distant hills raised my spirits enough to enjoy my breakfast and lecture preparation. *I keep forgetting to write as I get lost in the Beethoven.* The lectures went well and I had a nice chat with Subramaniam who wanted to come this evening so we fixed a sensible time – after his practical class which he is running. In the morning after lecture I sat on roof and finished a couple of days preparation; this was after I had wandered round the garden with camera to try to get a photo of the wagtail that is usually by the horrid black stream that runs down the side. I was diverted from this by a squawking shout from the mother of the kids I photographed yesterday, demanding a photo of herself. After obliging I was too hot to continue so sat on the roof in the shade and slight breeze, with butterflies and sunbirds for company. When chatting to Sai Gopal earlier he had reminded me that Saturday is 2nd in month and so a holiday from lectures. So, he triumphantly declared I would be free to accept an invitation to be the guest of honour at some lecture he has arranged by a visiting scientist. "Of course the students will come as I will tell them they must". Silly man. I told him I would go if I am free but not to print my name on invitations. Fortunate as it turns out. Gopi phoned later to say he would come on Friday night to take me to Chittoor next day to visit his family. I had a lecture from prof Mahadevan over lunch about the politics of vice chancellors etc and in particular the rivalry between the two sub-castes of the Reddys and the Naidus. They are in the caste just beneath the Brahmins and traditionally compete. At 4.30 I set out on walk round the dairy farm. The security man tried to stop me going in. A student, who I had just chatted briefly with, then explained that the gate would close at 5.00. I said this was odd as I came here nearly every day and the gate didn't close. An old man in white lungi then spoke to the security man as I was shrugging and turning away, to be called back and waved through. The old man walked beside me and told me that the land there was all belonging to our lord sri Venkateswara. I said that was probably why it was so beautiful and peaceful; yes sir I am so happy you understand [so much for my being facetious]. Almost immediately I got a nice picture of a coucal, but still not the picture I want, with its chestnut wings lit by sunlight. Farm was as

beautiful as ever with the palm trees against the backdrop of the red hills in the last evening light. I thanked the security guard [creep!] and got a salute. Not long after getting back Subbu phoned to say he would be there in 15 minutes, and immediately Susai phoned to ask if I could go with him as it was his one evening free. I said I would phone back. Enough of this. Subbu arrived 15 minutes late and with his cousin brother. I said we would all go to Susai's bar in the Bliss hotel but they declined so got dropped out of my auto on the way to the Bliss. Susai had an old school friend with him and we went to the dark bar for beer and red wine (for the friend – it tasted like slightly alcoholic thumbs up). We had a nice series of snacks – French fries, gobi Manchurian, boiled eggs in pepper. They were concerned that I wanted no more so I satisfied honour by having a butterscotch ice cream. "There is such a nice relaxed atmosphere here" said Susai as I looked at the almost dark room with groups sitting at tables with bottles and cigarettes and loud television playing Telugu musicals at us, all illuminated by little glow worms of the mobile phones in the hands of at least half the customers, Susai managing two at once. He told me the stories of the preachers at Tirumula who caused some offence and also about the nuns who spent a night in the police cells. Such things really are rare and don't seem to have the sort of cosmic significance that is sometimes given them by the church at home. All minorities get harassed occasionally by the odd fanatics. He has offered to try to book a room at the BANS hotel-resort near Chittoor so I shall try to get Madhu to come on Saturday night and also fit in Imran if possible. So we may have a nice reunion. What a nice simple day, finishing with just me and Beethoven. Libby sent a text message to say she has a chesty cough; I immediately felt guilty at my reaction that I'm glad it wasn't me. So to bed. I hope to have a quieter night as I dismantled the mosquito net on the windows in order to jam them more tightly shut.

Tuesday 6th. Started with a walk in nice cool morning but saw very few birds. Strange how that happens sometimes. By the end of my morning lecture [11.0] it was very hot with very little breeze during my walk back. Then spent morning finishing a bit of washing then preparing my afternoon lecture – on protein synthesis. In the afternoon Satheesh arrived to collect me to find me fast asleep on the bed. "Do you want to give your afternoon lecture sir or shall I cancel it" this sounded attractive but I still have some sort of work ethic. The first year students were waiting in a group for me to ask me to visit the hostel tonight which I agreed to. The ride back after the lecture was very hot so it does seem as if their promise of summer coming very soon is happening. I got back later than usual because the oldest of the Biochemistry professors – Parthasarathy - called into Sai Gopal's office to see me. He was very disappointed to hear that madam has already left. Of course he made me promise to come to the department for some 'interaction with the students'. This would be ok as long as no staff are there as this leads to embarrassed silent students. Back at the Guest house I found the Sunday Hindu book review pages which kept me going for a nice long read and I decided to stay and enjoy the shady cool of the roof – in Libby's corner rather than going for a walk in the afternoon heat. Imran has started to do Soduko puzzles in the paper and texted me one that he was having problems with. So I kindly copied it out and then failed to solve it. At 6.40 I walked down to the University entrance to catch an auto down to Balaji colony – to Adithi. He tried to charge me 15 rupees but I gave him only 10 one rupee coins and he just grinned and drove away. I was the only customer in the dark restaurant in which the fan was not working and mosquitoes were coming and my forearms stuck to the table. I bolted down some mushroom fried rice which had more than a sensible number of finely chopped chilis in it, then walked up to the hostels. Just as I entered C block I was grabbed by my old friend Sudarshan who I have not seen for a couple of years. He has been in US. So we arranged to meet tomorrow morning as I was captured by tall Chaitanya and led by the hand to his room where we were soon joined by another 9 students. I did my raja thing slouched on the steel bed while they draped themselves about. They had prepared a paper plate with 3 laddoos, one of which I enjoyed and then insisted they should put by for other friends later. Had very nice time, with one little fat Jewish Indian student singing a Hebrew devotional song. Chaitanya then grabbed a hardboard writing sheet and with another student launched into a complicated rhythmical drumming and singing during which Libby tried to phone but got cut off twice. The smallest of the students is a dancer (Subbaiah) but he was too shy so I said he should

come to the guest house and dance there. As soon as there was a lull in activity I got out the camera and off we went again, a few of them including Subbaiah, Murali [Sreedhar] and Chaitanya bullying everyone about so they could be close on the beds to their raja. They are a very nice affectionate lot and of course insisted on walking back to the guest house. Halfway, at the University main entrance I persuaded them to return, with the promise that they would come to visit me tomorrow evening. After holding hands with them in turn little Subbaiah nestled up for a hug while they explained that they wanted to give him to me to take home as a present. I accepted gracefully. I just phoned Libby to hear she has a terrible cold and that we are to have a little girl grandchild which is good news for Libby [all of us of course but she will enjoy a bit of feminininitine about the place]. Gopi phoned to say that his Seminar went well and that he can now visit – will come on Friday night and we will go to ~Chittoor next morning. It is now 10.20 so shall listen to some music while reading in bed [on bed – it is too hot to be in it]. Listened to Paul Lewis playing Beethoven Pathetique sonata.

Wednesday 17th. *I am writing this after my guests have gone, with a dry throat from too much chatting, while listening to a Beethoven op 18 quartet.*

I had a very disturbed night and got up feeling stiff and disgruntled at 6.45 but forced myself out for a stroll and was soon grunted back again to contentment, although rather few birds. Just as I was going to get the ultimate beautiful picture of a male golden oriole a gang of youths came running out of a compound “hello sir come and talk to us”. I was told later they were on a NCC (cadet corps) camp. I escaped by taking photo to their delight. Amazingly I bumped into some of them again this evening down Balaji colony. Imran phoned to say that he had solved the sudoku but confessed he had made a mistake and corrected it from this mornings paper. He seems to have missed the point somewhere. Having had a rather meagre dinner last night I bolted my bread omelette with more than usual pleasure before Satheesh drove me to my morning lecture on butanol fermentation. The walk back is getting hotter every day. I just had time to throw a bucket of luke warm water over me and Sudarshan arrived. He is on holiday from his MSc in San Francisco. Last time I saw him was the year before last when he was rather depressed. He did really well in his exams here in spite of that and is now about to do a PhD in Houston or Dallas. He was somewhere in Texas on a course last year when the town was hit by hurricane Rita and the whole town was evacuated for 4 weeks where he said they would have starved if it was not for a gang of Christian students who set up a camp for them in a sports stadium. He is here for a few weeks so we will meet up again soon. Satheesh had to wake me again for my afternoon lecture – on protein synthesis to Previous year who reminded me that I was due to have them visit this evening. On the way out the final year student Srinivas came up sheepishly to apologise for not attending my last two lectures (“family matters”). So we arranged that he would visit this evening. I spent the afternoon on the roof reading Mila and Mary’s paper on *Methylobacillus* genome with its usual slightly muddled biochemistry which I will have to tactfully correct. Srinivas and Susai arrived together at about 5.30; Srinivas to go to town and Susai to bring my rupees – in exchange for some £s. The Kalyan residency was disappointing. We were too early for real dinner so ordered onion dosas followed by veg burger and crisps for me and pizza for Srinivas. This took 25 minutes to prepare so I had finished mine before he started. He seemed to have missed the point of a pizza as he started by scraping the veggie topping off it and then using the pastry squashed up like a chapatti to eat the mess of veggies. I wanted to get back immediately to Guest house but he insisted that we go shopping, something I had earlier agreed to. I had forgotten how basic his English is and he was incapable [–or unwilling] of telling me what his plan was. We arrived in a dim crowded back street and walked into a sort of Tardis clothes shop which was 4 stories of brightly lit spacious counters. We went up to the top in a lift where he chose a white shirt which he then asked me to pay for [350 rupees]. Cheeky boy. Four of the previous year boys came [late of course] to guest house and were good company, especially Chaitanya, tall, dark very thin and handsome and popular with the others. I remembered I had Ramachandran’s small recordings of bits of our Beethoven 9th performance which I was able to play them. We then had an illuminating discussion about caste. They were all scheduled caste, one of whom they said was the exception because he was rich [the tall smiling

Sreedhar]. They explained that prof Srinivasulu is a scheduled caste whereas Sai Gopal is a Brahmin, but they have a perfectly good relationship. They told me that Gopi is from a Backward caste – a little higher than scheduled [from his name – Yadav]. They went off at 10 O'clock after putting Chaitanya's mobile number on my phone, "if ever you need anything just call and I will immediately fly to your assistance". I have just celebrated Clive and Tiffany's future daughter with the last pieces of plain chocolate. Had a nice call from libby who is sounding a bit more alive. The 4th quartet has just finished and so shall I.

Thursday 8th. Feb. Woke in a panic at 6.20 realising that I had not prepared completely this morning's lecture. It was soon finished so could go for a stroll through usual places near the Army stables; there is a huge tree near there covered in red berries and this morning it had 7 red eyed black male koil cuckoos. Saw white fronted drongos golden orioles red whiskered bulbuls sun birds galore hoopoes magpie robins and the inevitable babblers. It was already hot as we gently drove in to my morning lecture. The Tirupati weather station is just beside the Virology Department and I have just seen in the Hindu that the maximum today was 35 C. After the lecture I was taken to pay respects to the principal of the faculty. I could understand nothing of what he said so sat nodding and grinning. Then back to hot roof to prepare Previous year lectures on Transcription – a subject I have previously avoided. Actually it was quite interesting and enjoyable to give in the heat of the afternoon. When I took the register, with the usual giggles from the girls as I get their names wrong, I realised that the small student Subbaiah who was donated to me last night was absent so I checked to see if he was under my table which brought cheers and clapping. What a wit. *I am expecting a visit from Srinivas who called earlier to ask if he could come at 8.00. It is now 10.20. It doesn't matter as I have finished my preparation for tomorrow's final year lecture.* It was too hot to do much this afternoon so I finished a bit of preparation then read Amartya Sen, slept, then wandered down town, the first half with a friendly motorcyclist who was leaving guest house at same time. Gopi had phoned earlier to ask me to top up his phone. I was told that all I do is go to a phone booth and give his name and phone number and money. But a rather officious young man quizzed me about how do I know this fellow, what sort of friend - family or colleague; how did I have his number; why was I paying. So I left and went next door where the whole transaction was over in a couple of minutes. Susai has booked me a room in the PANS holiday resort near Chittoor so I will go there with Gopi after visiting his family on Saturday [good plan chris]. I wandered gently down Ghandi road [as far as that is possible] to Sinduri park where I had thali and ice cream while reading the Hindu. Very peaceful. Madhu called and agreed to come to the PANS for Saturday night. As agreed with Gopi, I called Imran to invite him to join us on Sunday – as he can drive by bike from Kaddapah. As I expected, he tried to take control "no need to tell me where it is chris you can come and meet me in Chittoor; no chris there is no place with a swimming pool there". The only thing to do with him is to cut him off "We will be by the swimming pool at the BANS and Gopi is very enthusiastic for you to join us – come if you want, bye". So back to the guest house with my stolen Hindu, and Mendelssohn String Quartets. Earlier an excited Surya had phoned to say that there was 5 inches of snow in East Ham. Sounds wonderful. Hope poor Libby is better.

Friday 9th Feb. The Chief Minister [CM] of Andhra Pradesh is visiting today to attend the wedding of a political colleague. This meant that Satheesh was trapped behind a security cordon preventing traffic movement. Somehow he persuaded them that picking up a very important English professor was very important and more important than the security of the CM. So I got to my lecture on time. I had a typical day until late afternoon when I realised that I had not had an afternoon walk for some time so off I went after drinking half a bottle of water. Fortunately I picked up an auto immediately and drove down the long hot road to the edge of Thummalagunta. I then walked past and out towards the hills past the other little village where I was entertained by the usual gang of little boys, one of whom wanted me to photograph him as he climbed a very tall electricity pole. I quickly got a picture and stopped him at about 10 feet up; he seemed relieved that he didn't have to go to the top as promised. Fortunately there was quite a strong wind which kept the temperature down [the recorded temperature today was 35 C]. I came across an unexpected bypass road where I was made to photograph two drunk old men before crossing it

and continuing through wonderful farm fields towards the hills, with rapidly declining sun on my right. I suppose it was as the fields around Thummalagunta used to be, with mud tracks joining the odd house and paddy fields and coconut groves, palms, corn and fallow fields filled with goats. All the time I was buzzed by swallows, parakeets and drongos whose favourite perch is the back or head of a cow. At last I have seen Rollers rolling, a sort of aerial dance between two of them, with flashes of British Gas blues. As the sun started to set red behind the hills I turned to go back and realised I had come rather a long way so had quite a slog home, accompanied by different groups of bored teenagers. I was held up three times to take photos of men on tractors; they are so proud of them so the photo is a sort of homage for which they are grateful. When I got back to the Thummalagunta road I had wonderful luck of an auto – driven by a 12 year old who insisted he was 16. He wanted 35 rupees [should be 15-20] but agreed 30; I would have given him a 100 if necessary. We got stuck amongst the buses and tractors at the rail crossing where he asked me to buy him 2 tiny samosas for a rupee which I did. One was for me it seemed but I let him have it then gave him the 35 rupees he had first asked for; he kissed the notes, nodded and smiled and held out his hand for me to shake, then more smiles and he turned the auto on its own axis and trundled off waving. Soon after my warm shower/bath Gopi arrived complete with big smile and a toothbrush. After insisting it was my choice where we ate he said he preferred non-veg which fixed us at the Fortune Kences. It was crowded and too cool and we had to wait for ages for our birianis. My beer was wonderful and the food was ok but it was about £6 for two which has come to seem a lot. Back to the guest house for a nice long drowsy chat followed by sleep interrupted by usual noise and the need to turn the fan on and off.

Saturday 10th. This is the day of the great plan. To visit Gopi's, go on to the BANS holiday resort to swim etc. The idea was that Madhu would come from Bangalore [it is on the Bangalore road] and Imran would come Sunday. The day started with a bad omen – Madhu phoned to say that an ex MLA (senior politician) had been attacked and his 2 bodyguards killed. He escaped but the police had declared a curfew so maybe we could not go to Chittoor. At last Gopi finished his shower and explained to Madhu that it only meant that there would be a lot of police in the town to prevent an large groups of people collecting together. I later read that this politician was a known criminal himself and had survived a trial for murder. Our driver was Arjun [our Chennai driver] who was eventually persuaded that he should follow Gopi's instructions and not go his fast way to Chittoor. We drove behind the hills that I had approached yesterday and followed the beautiful rural route we went last year. Half way to Chittoor we stopped at a small town and picked up Gopi's father with his magnificent handlebar moustaches and went to Gopi's mother's village and for a walk up the very hot hill nearby, accompanied by drongos and rollers and singing bulbuls. The village was not more than half a dozen houses, mostly rough bricks with palm thatch, with buffalo, goats chickens and cows wandering about in the sun. They have a very deep well, similar to the one at dairy farm but no brick sides – and water in it which was being filtered and pumped into irrigation channels around the local fields. It is such a peaceful place and it is very nice to know that is where Gopi goes during college holidays. Of course we had the usual photo sessions before we returned Gopi's father back to his duty at the boys hostel where we had more photos, with Gopi using the small camera more effectively than I used my big one. We had a rather unnecessarily hair raising drive the 25 km to Chittoor on narrow country roads with the driver Arjun speeding and hooting too much. I feel the villages belong to the people wandering about them and it is horribly aggressive to hoot them out of the way [this is my standard grumpy old man moan]. It didn't seem a year since I was last in Gopi's small house but it obviously was as there is now a 9 month baby girl in the household – Gopi's brother's child. She is passed round between the brothers, mother, grandmother and neighbours as their new treasured toy. The only table in the house was dug out from beneath its heaps of clothes etc to provide me with a table for my lunch which I had to eat alone, the others eating next door in a kitchen dining room, sitting on the floor with banana leaf plates. As it is Saturday the tradition is to eat no meat so I had a nice simple veggie lunch. After a final bout of photos and tea we set off for the BANS resort. Gopi said it was only 3km but we took a route that was 12 km – Arjun insisting he knew the way, but it was to the wrong place. Feeling slightly irritated we arrived at

last and then had to wait for 5 minutes while Gopi persuaded them to open the big security gates. We found there was no reception area; it was still being built. We were shown to a small room and 5 people then discussed me with Gopi. Eventually we were shown to a beautiful room, spoilt by being next door to building works making enough noise to stop us talking. There were then more long discussions between 4 of the staff and Gopi, held outside while I used the loo inside. He then came in and explained that the place was not really open and that I had been given a room as a friend of a friend (Susai) of a staff member. But Madhu would not be allowed to stay and no other person could go in the room and the pool was not operating and of course food was available but only for me. So the whole point of the plan, for all of us to spend the day together in this posh nice resort was lost. In a flash of irritation and disappointment I said OK Gopi off we go there is nothing for us here. "Good idea Chris, let's go". So we quickly phoned Madhu to tell him to stick to our original plan and to come to Tirupati [easier than getting to Chittoor] and off we went the 3km to Gopi's for another goodbye and tea and Gopi generously came back with me to Tirupati, on the lovely Chittoor/Tirupati road, a 70 minute journey in the late afternoon sun over the paddy fields and hills to my nice old room. Went yet again to Sinduri park for dinner then put Gopi on the bus back to Chittoor.

Madhu's plan had been to catch the fast bus as soon as he finished work to arrive by about 10.30 but there was a problem with the buses and so he had to wait for a later bus. He phoned to tell me this, saying "Chris please wait, do not go to sleep". I did sleep but left the door unlocked so was woken by a very cold Madhu, the bus being a super efficient AC coach. He had a hot bathe to warm up, then woke me again to have a nice sleepy chat, the last part being conducted by him rolled up like a street sleeper with head covered in his bedsheet.

Sunday 11th Feb. We woke up lazily, with me feeling disloyal in not going for my morning walk. I went down to see if I could negotiate an Indian breakfast [they cycle to a restaurant to get it in tiffin tins]. I had 4 people including deaf Suri trying to help – no I want tiffin for 2 in 10 minutes – not tiffin for 10 in 2 minutes. So we eventually had dosa and idli and lots of sweet tea. The only plans we had was to [perhaps] go to the Guestline to swim and to do some shopping for smart pants for Madhu – he is not supposed to wear jeans for work. So we walked into town in the mid morning heat to a very posh shop in a side road off Ghandi road. I was surprised they had trousers with a 28 inch waist but they did – at least a dozen all slung across the counters. He had asked for pants for 350 rupees but of course they had thrown in some for 550 which were very obviously superior so I persuaded him that this would not break the bank and for that price they gave him the very cool cream trousers with a 20% discount on a nice dark blue formal shirt. Very smart, all for about £7. Then off to Sinduri park hotel for lunch followed by a stroll down Ghandi road in baking heat [beautiful climate isn't it chris] and back home to my AC haven where we made up for our short night by sleeping and chatting, deciding that a swim in the Guestline pool was not worth the hassle. Our plans were then affected by the Supreme Court. They had recently made a judgement that had taken 17 years on how the water from the great Cauvery river should be divided between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka state [capital Bangalore]. The government of Karnataka felt it should have been 50/50 but they got 45 to Tamil Nadu's 55% and so had declared a Bhand or official government strike. That meant there would be no buses to Bangalore and the strike would mean no work for Madhu next day [Monday]. A friend phoned to tell him this so he decided to get the bus to Chittoor and stay with his father, so off he went down the road to get an auto to the main bus stand.

Soon after I got back I had a call from a Previous year student [tall thin Chaitanya Kumar] asking if he and Hari Krishna could come and visit so I suggested we all went to Sinduri park to eat so they arranged to come at 7. I said I was hungry so come English time not Indian time. Amazingly they turned up at 6.50. They suggested we went in a 'bus' auto, designed to take 4 passengers but often carrying 8. We had 7 including a little boy on my lap. They are so noisy that the irritation of hooting traffic is absent – it can't be heard. Surprisingly the hotel [restaurant] was fullish and a grinning waiter said "my" table was occupied. The air conditioning was also on full so it was a bit cool. As soon as we sat down I had a phone call asking if I was Anthony. I couldn't make sense of him so Chaitanya tried to understand. It was someone whose photo I had

taken at the little tea stall where I buy my water. I couldn't remember him at all but apparently he wanted to give me his address so I could send a print of the photo. He would not go so I cut him off and he called three more times during the evening finishing with an agreement that I would call in at his stall next day at 10.30. [I did so but he was not there]. Had usual sort of dinner with good company. The students were best friends but from very different backgrounds. Hari Krishna's father is a bank manager, his brother is a software engineer (I told him all the brothers of every person I met was a software engineer) and his sister is a dentist. Chaitanya Kumar's father is an illiterate farmer from up state in Nellore district. I asked if he was a rich farmer and he said no because he was paying for the education of 3 sons. We returned by auto and they wanted to come in so I said as long as they entertained me and didn't expect me to be very awake. I opened the computer at the Indian music Imran had put on last year and soon Chaitanya was hopping/dancing to the song that Madhu plays most. They were good company but soon C noticed that I was falling asleep so they "made a move and took our leave sir". I lay on the bed exhausted and fell asleep with the light on, waking at about 6.00 with very stiff neck and a headache. I think my usual disturbed sleep is a good thing as I wake enough to move about and so don't seize up so completely. I also had slight toothache which is still there.

Monday 12th feb. I took an ibuprofen for my head/neckache but it had no effect so I shaved and went for a walk, being immediately surprised by the slightly damp English summer smell. Clouds were partly obscuring the red hills and there was only occasional sun but the birds were very lively. My favourite big red-berried tree had the usual complement of 7 Koels, mynahs, babblers, parakeets, coppersmith barbets and two golden orioles. I saw a Brahminy mynah for the first time this year.

Clive has just phoned; so nice to hear him - guess he is on early morning or late night duty. Have just started to listen to Beethoven's op 127 quartet. I have avoided listening to it before as I don't want to spoil it by overplaying. No chance. Every time I hear the big opening chords I remember exactly the first time I heard it – on a new record in the little back room at home in Eastfield Avenue. This recording is the fabulous Takacs quartet. It is so powerful that I even smiled at the cockroach that just wandered past without so much as a courtesy nod to me.

I had a nice restful workday, lecturing and preparing. In the afternoon it was too hot to do much so I turned on the AC and tidied the room. At 4.30 it was cool enough to sit outside in the shade to do some reading for my next few lectures. At about 5.0 Madhu called from Chittoor to say he was wasting his day in Chittoor and had to wait till late to get a bus to Bangalore because of the strike so could he come to Tirupati and catch the fast coach from here; "I know you may be bored on me chris but I am missing you". Irresistible. So he arrived and after a nice chat in the cooling evening we went by autobus down to the bus stand and had quick dinner in the Myaura restaurant, before waving goodbye as I scrabbled about among the usual muddled crowds of people struggling across from the buses to the hotels, while waving to Madhu's orange shirt, on his way in the opposite direction. I think he will get the fast bus which will get him home half past midnight, but he will sleep on the bus. So I had a (too) fast auto drive back here. The quartet has just finished so I shall go to bed – that is I shall lie down beneath a fast fan on my thin mattress.

Tuesday 13th Feb. This time in two weeks I will be home. Seems a long time. I slept rather poorly, waking at one point dreaming of going to an Indian dentist with my very mild toothache which is still there but no worse. I read from 5.00 to 6.0 then slept till 7.30, waking to a very gray hot humid day. The VC is having some special lunch here today so the place was soon smelling of frying vegetables which were being prepared on the floor outside and in the kitchen and in the dining hall. Suri had been sent shopping so there was no bread omelette. As I wandered out of the hall I met Mahadevan striding in wearing a baseball cap and white sweater, waving a badminton racket and shouting Suri coffee coffee. I told him there was no sign of suri so he said I must have some of his healthy breakfast so I followed him to his room to receive two guavas and two small bananas. The price was a lecture on how good badminton is compared with my walking "which only exercises below the hips while badminton deals effectively with every organ in the body" [except his brain?]. Yesterday at breakfast Madhu met Mahadevan who after the usual nice

formal introductions in which Madhu gave a brief CV, gave us a lecture on how most chief ministers are not intelligent and are corrupt – except for two who Madhu noticed he later emphasised were his friends. [*I am writing this in the evening while listening to Beethoven quartet op 131*]. Satheesh arrived complaining of a lost voice and sore throat; lets hope he doesn't find it and give it to me. After my hot sweaty lecture I walked to Balaji colony to try to use internet to deal with some orchestra stuff but I could only access my two old accounts. Very frustrating. I dealt with everything later by phoning Richard Tank and Sue Edmonds. Great day – I washed my white [gray] bedsheet and dried it in an hour on my mosquito net frame. It was very sultry so I sulked and did a load more washing to feel I had achieved something. As I prepared more lectures in the afternoon on the arabinose operon and lambda phage I had a phone call from little Subbaiah asking if he could visit in 10 minutes so rushed about tidying away my decorative underpants. He came with the smallish very dark student [Sudarker]. They are both very affectionate and insisted on giving me a hug each as they presented me with three chocolates. They were very good company although Subbaiah also had a nasty cough – which he was very sensitive about. They had missed the visit last week to see photos so they had a private viewing of Christmas at the Anthonys. The father of one of them is a business man, supplying seeds to farmers and Subbaiah's father is a farmer up near Konanki where Nagaraju's family has their farm. They enjoyed my description of my village experience. As arranged, Sudarshan arrived at 6.15 so they chatted together about the department while I rested. After the boys had gone we had nice long chat then down to kalyan residency for dinner before Sudarshan took his bus to Trichanur.

Quartet has finished so off to bed.

Wednesday Feb 14th. Had a very disturbed night again with stiff neck, but slept soundly between 6 and 7.30 so only had time for a short stroll to my big berry tree where I failed again to get good pictures of golden orioles but the attempt was enjoyable. No sign of yesterdays cloud and by 8.10 it was getting too hot. Had a text message from Stuart telling me how to access my webmail account. So after a final year lecture I got an auto in the heat down to Balaji colony to internet where I found I only had unimportant orchestra stuff plus a few unimportant bits and pieces. My lecture was remarkable in that there were more boys than girls to start with but they soon trooped in, pausing in the open doorway for me to call them in. Anusha was a sheepish last. In the middle of the lecture I had a call from Gopi – I got the class to all shout hello gopi to him. One of the girls called happy valentines day – a common greeting it seems. He was in Tirupati registering to get his degree certificate. He did a general BSc and is now doing a 3 year MCA Master of Computing Applications. He wanted to know if he could come and visit. He called at lunch time to borrow the small camera for his friend to take photos of his classmates [they later turned up to make a cd of the downloaded pictures]. The drive to the afternoon class [trp operon] lacked the usual cooling effect of the flowing air on the motorbike – the air flowed like a fan heater. I then sat in the shade on the roof reading for more lectures and waiting for Gopi who arrived with friend who then had to be shown all gopi's family pictures from this year and last. Eventually the friend left having had his darshan of me, complete with photos with the god. I have had the air conditioning on most of the day so had a nice chat lying on the cool beds before going off down to Balaji colony to eat at Harry's Cove; this is near Athidi, the food is better, the tables are clean and the waiters seem to want to serve. I had prawn biriani which was so spicy the prawns could have been anything. The neutralising butterscotch ice cream was wonderful. Gopi got them to turn down the tele in the corner – the only negative feature other than the lighting is too low to read by when alone [Gopi always calls the waiters 'boss' as a safe friendly respectful name – better than prof Mahadevan yelling 'Babu' till someone comes running]. Gopi came back for a few litres of water, another gentle chat and off to catch the bus from the stop by the level crossing. Madhu just called to wish me a happy valentines day as did Subbaiah and Srinivas. The last two both asked "where are you sir? Shall I come sir?" I said yes to both but neither seems to be coming which is a relief as I feel like doing what I " [*Srinivas has just come in, interrupting the Hammerklavier sonata; he is welcome – written because he is reading this*"]".

Srinivas stayed gently murmuring bits of his life story while I lay on my bed struggling to stay awake; a wonderful feeling to just give in and fall asleep. “Sir you are sleeping; do you like my voice as lullaby-baby sir; did I say that right sir?” etc. I then woke to find him gone with a scribbled note; sir, you look very nice asleep sir so sweet dreams sir.

Thursday Feb 15th. I woke very early so got up and set out about 7.00 for a walk through the usual places with usual birds. As the sun came through the early morning cloud it became very hot and sticky. As I returned through the area where the university has employee’s houses there was a shout and one of the guest house staff came running out of his house in his lungi to ask me in for chai, with his wife nodding and grinning vigorously. I mimed that Suri would be waiting with my tiffin so I had to leave it. Later I got Subramanyan to ask his name – it is Nike; he is aged about 40 and always has a nice smiling welcome. A bit further down the road three of my little cricket friends came running up to have their photos taken. I gave my final Final year lecture this morning – on methanogenesis. I would have to prepare a lot of new stuff on very dull topics to continue with them; this year I have done more than previous because there have been no lengthy interruptions by holidays or strikes. Anyway the chalk box had no useful chalk left, only little stumps. By the afternoon it was replenished so I told the Previous students I had no excuse to stop so would continue if they voted me to. So of course they did. They are a very nice set; the boys are brighter than usual and the girls are very pretty. It does mean that I am having to do a lot of preparation; new lectures on arabinose operon, lambda phage, nif and nod genes (nitrogen fixation). It has been mainly cloudy which has stopped it being very hot; it is merely hot and sticky rather than oven baking hot. Tomorrow is a holiday celebrating some story about Shiva [called shiva astray]. I asked the students what the holiday is and some said it is Shiva’s birthday while others said it is his wedding day. It is neither apparently but exactly what it is depends on your tradition. The holiday is because tonight his devotees stay up all night to pray to him and they need tomorrow to recover. After my lecture I lay on the bed with the AC on, cooling me and drowning the traffic noise. At 4.30 I got an auto out beyond Thumulagunta, turning right and going out to the bypass. I then repeated the walk of the other day out towards the hills. There were dramatic thunderclouds with silver linings with the setting sun behind. The only hint of ‘civilisation’ was occasional distant traffic sounds and the click of my camera. There was a lot of paddy and sugar cane but no water birds except for a few egrets flying overhead. The farm workers who saw me taking photos of their kind-looking cows and irritable nervous buffaloes all wanted me to take theirs as well. At that time of evening there is a lovely atmosphere, with only an hour to go till darkness. [*Having another attempt to listen to the Hammerclavier sonata*]. I thought that if I continued taking little paths between the fields I should reach some kind of road and get back eventually to the bypass. But the dry mud road took me further away but then veered around towards Tirupathi so I continued, there being still about 40 minutes before darkness. I was rather relieved when I eventually came to a village where they waved me on “Tirupati straight”. As I was walking parallel to the red Tirumula hills I would have to turn left eventually. After another 20 minutes brisk walking I came across a bigger road and realised it was the road that we took to go to Gopi’s home beyond the hills. Thinking (correctly) that it must be at least 3 km to Tirupati I waved down an auto bus. They are autos modified slightly to take 4 passengers on two facing bench seats. They rarely have fewer than 8 people crammed in and this was no exception so I had to sit on the bit of seat by the driver, choosing at every swerve and bump between myself and binoculars and camera. It is a bit like riding an auto driven by an outboard pneumatic drill. Eventually we joined the Trichanur road and after another 2 km we were on the outskirts of Tirupati where I slid off gratefully handing over my 6 rupees fare and transferring my affections to a real auto to slog back to the guest house. With enormous self control and exercise of will I had a bath shower before slumping down exhausted on the bed to wait for Subramanian. Of course he would choose this occasion to be exactly on time so my rest was 5 minutes. But he was happy to hang around before going to eat, chatting about his family as I dosed on the bed. I have had a toothache all afternoon – the sort that can be ignored when engaged in something interesting; it still makes me [as they say here] a little dull. We went again to Harry’s Cove in Balaji colony. Again by auto bus. Of course two visits on consecutive

nights meant Subramanian was grilled by the waiters, subbu's answers giving the gist of the conversation; "university guest house; professor; England; 25 years; famous[?!]; 2 sons; virology; student; friend. These were the English words mixed up with the Telugu. Food was very good again and only a little more than £1 each. Subbu kindly led me by the hand through the happy evening crowds past Town Club and the red 4-headed Muragan (monkey god) into Ghandi road to a watch shop where there was a man with a workbench who fitted a new leather strap [difficult because of an intricate fixing arrangement] in about 20 minutes and charged a total of 50 rupees [70p]. *I have just nodded off, a potential disaster as the computer could fall, so will stop and enjoy the rest of the Beethoven lying on my back.* It is nice thinking of Libby at home knowing that she has been here and especially that she liked the good things. Goodnight.

Friday 16th february. *[I am writing this at the end of a quiet day. Small Subbaiah was supposed to be coming "I will surely be coming sir at 8 O'clock exactly". It is now 9.30 so I phoned others in his group but all had their phones off so they have probably all gone off to pictures. I called Srinivas who said he wanted to come today and he called back a few minutes ago to ask can I come sir I will be there fast].*

I woke this morning to the blaring squealing irritable traffic noise at 6.30 with usual stiff neck, so staggered up and out to look at the humid gray morning. It is Shivarastri so a holiday. As always once I started my morning walk I felt a bit more alive but not very motivated so set off up the University road directly away from the guest house towards the NCC Nagar, Pausing at a few of the houses on the way where it seems the cricket gang live. It is nice seeing the houses waking up with children washing outside and cooking at little open fires. They all have kitchens so I suppose they just like being outside and the fuel is free. I walked right out to the rough track that runs parallel to the distant bypass and followed it for a long way out towards Chittoor and towards the zoo road. Saw mainly bulbuls robins doves and sunbirds. The trees are all losing their leaves now except for one of my favourites that has deep emerald subdivided leaves and that one seems to be gaining its lovely leaves. I eventually came out near the distant place where I saw the monkeys with Libby. I walked 90 minutes without stopping and staggered in overheated and hungry to an eager Suri who ran down the hall to get my omelette going. I am entering the usual last financial period when I am not sure if I will last until the university hands over my cash. So I autoed down to Ghandi road and found the main branch of the State Bank of India [no university branch does foreign exchange, whatever Sai gopal insists]. It is down the end of the nice little road where they specialise in ropes, coconuts and garland making. It felt strange walking out of that very hot noisy jasmine-smelling street into the coolish air conditioned bank, the foreign exchange part being in a separate room. After waving my traveller's cheque I was told to sit down and so I did for a 25 minute wait. When I signed the piece of paper for the bank it was scrutinised carefully and shown with the cheque to the manager and they then explained that my signatures did not match – although they had watched me signing both. The one on the cheque they were concerned about was the one I had signed 6 weeks ago and had to be crushed into a small space. So I explained that this was the effect of the heat in India – half spoken half mimed. They liked this but I still had to re-sign their paper in the same cramped way to be satisfied. I was then handed a neat bundle of 84 100 rupee notes. I thought I was near enough to the Kalyan residency to go and book my car for next weekend. It was, but hardly a peaceful stroll. There was a little line of autoes with loudspeakers braying and screeching film music followed by a small truck advertising a film and three of its stars standing waving in the back. The main one I have seen on adverts and wondered why he always looks green. Well he does. He had the usual dark glasses and fat moustache with lips reddened with lipstick and very pale green-white face makeup. All very horrible. I collapsed at Ravi's desk, arranged the car, stole their Hindu and gave myself the luxury of having coffee and butterscotch ice cream before returning by auto to the guest house where I had a very early lunch of chapattis with potatoes in chillie green slime with what appeared to be cockroach carcasses. Tasted alright. I am not sure what I did with the afternoon except that towards the end, feeling I had achieved nothing all day, I set up my tripod and did some experiments with the camera eventually working out the safest way of using flash. I have Leigh's function to worry about. Next week Imran has invited me to his friends wedding

here in Tirupati so I shall practice there. Subbaiah called to arrange to come tonight and I decided to have a lone dinner at Sinduri park. I got down town a bit too early so wandered about taking more street scenes with flash. At the gate of the college where Libby had photographed all the bikes I saw a face I recognised – it was Sai Gopal's lumpy daughter looking quite impressive in a sparkly green and gold dress thing. She was waiting for him to give her a lift home. Her college hours are 7 morning till 9 at night [finishing 2 hours early today]. I was fooled in Sinduri park by the attractive Chinese menu with its sweet and sour vegetables; it was slightly sweet but the sourness was of course provided by chillies so I drank most of a litre of mineral water and came back here to wait and wait and wait. I am writing this now two days later and cannot remember if he came.

Saturday 17th February. Another cloudy but steamy morning. Had a chat with one of my new neighbours [Shiva]. He is a young software engineer from a company in Hyderabad visiting with his colleague Shankar to write programmes for the university exam system. He is rather keen that I join him for a walk up the hill to the temple but I said I was too busy in my last week. There was a visitor to the department from Bharat biotechnology – a big successful Indian company. He had been an MSc student and apparently I taught him some years ago. As usual Sai Gopal had messed up everyone's teaching programme by getting him to give a lecture and of course I had to be a special guest. We sat in a hot lecture room for 20 minutes while they messed about with the projector and then he gave a rather elementary talk about protein purification etc. Then we went off to lunch on three motorbikes – to Harry's cove in Balaji colony. I am sure they would do better if they had an Indian name as no one knows how to say the name. The usual silly hierarchy applied, so Sai Gopal had to go first although he did not know the place and Satheesh had to go last with me, the only one who knew it. When they all went off the wrong way I bullied Satheesh not to follow them but to go to the restaurant to wait. They turned up eventually and we had a nice lunch after the usual lengthy debates on what to have, the chief distinctions being between Veg and non-veg and between dry or gravy 'items'. Sai Gopal tried to tell the waiter that he must not put too much chillie in my dish; silly man – they probably just keep pots of each dish anyway, I feel like screaming mind your own business stupid. I was then rushed back to give my Previous lecture on lambda phage to a full load of students who are such a relief after sai gopal. Little Subbaiah who had not come yesterday was very apologetic explaining that he had to go to the Temple for Mahasivarastri. I guess that it was very busy and so he was too late to come. They all apologised for him and he arranged with his friend to come this evening. It was nice and breezy so I walked back after my lecture and had a pleasant time on the roof preparing more 1st year lectures. I am covering new stuff now and learning things that for years I have heard Terry Drabble talk about but have not understood; the stringent response, attenuation, global regulation etc. I do not need to keep on but they are so enthusiastic it is worth the trouble. I still have not written the reports on Mila and Mary's paper – nor judith klinman's and hiro's. Sudhaker and Subbaiah turned up at 5.30 instead of 6.30 so it was good that I did not go for a walk. Subbaiah is slightly vain and wanted to know how he looks and will he be able to get lots of girlfriends. I said all the right things and kept getting soppy hugs from him while sudhaker looked on with a fatherly grin; he seems to be Subbu's minder. We eventually set off to go to Sinduri park for dinner and they assumed I wanted to go in one of the little auto buses. Same as autoes but taking more people – 8 this evening, with an aggressive hooting driver who hit the speed bumps as if he was in a steeplechase. The restaurant was relatively full and had 3 tables with little spoilt kids running around. The boys came back to the guesthouse where I had to entertain for a further hour before they got the hints and left. I slumped face down on the bed as soon as the y had gone and was woken at 12.30 by Madhu wearing his smart new cream pants. "Hello Chris your neck is better is it: I think so". And he is right[ish]. I had told him I could not sleep in more than one position but it seems I slept for three hours with no problem. He was very sleepy but we still managed to chat dreamily for half an hour. I slept continuously (very rare), waking at about 6.30. We got up slowly and I had idli and pakora for breakfast while Madhu had his 20 minute bathe. He was certain he did not want to go swimming and was going back soon after lunch. Gopi turned up at 11.30 and they had a long chat with Madhu telling excitedly all about his job while

Gopi told about his MCA [Master of Computer Applications] which Madhu thinks is a good course and should get Gopi a decent job. We set off for breakfast for Madhu and early lunch for me and Gopi. They wanted to have non-veg so we went to Fortune Kences which was a big mistake except for having a chat with Susai. We had to wait for one hour for our food and service generally was bad. It did give the boys plenty of time to catch up – they had not met during the last year. I still have my dull nagging toothache so felt a bit dull as they say. Madhu went off to the coach station to go back to Bangalore [by way of his parents in Chittoor, getting home eventually by 4 in the morning] while Gopi and I went by auto back home, having my first near accident on the way. Of course every other yard is a near accident but here two boys on a bicycle crossed the road directly in front of us and we had to skid to just gently hit the back of the bike. The driver leapt out and belted the older boy who just stood bravely receiving the punches to his shoulders while the driver screamed in rage. Gopi commented “I think the driver is angry chris”. Flopped onto the beds with AC rattling away until we both slept. When I woke Gopi said he needed to sleep more which he did while I read for an hour. I then went out on roof and found it was deliciously cool with a strong breeze and very dark clouds above the hills. So I went for a short walk on university campus where the breeze dropped and back came the clammy heat. Yells of Uncle uncle called me over to meet the father of one of the little footballers; he is prof of geology [Reddy] and is a good friend of Sai Gopal. I resisted his invitation to come in for tea but I might accept it tomorrow. [I later learned that the little boys are sons of the servants who have separate small houses behind the main ones]. After nice dinner in Harry’s cove we returned to guest house and Gopi has just gone off for his bus ride back to Chittoor. Had a nice but brief chat with Libby at Hugh and Marys and am waiting for our Hugh to call me. I called him in the end – he did not have my proper phone numbers. It is always so nice to hear him. He is at last recovering from his cold/flu. And was able to attend the library meeting to discuss their work with his supervisor Sam gone. I also had a call from Leigh – the first I have heard from him for 2 weeks. He is of course stressed about the wedding. I told him that I had been practising taken pictures of people in all circumstances so would not let him down.

Good night.

Monday 19th February. I woke with a horrible headache but oddly no toothache. I forced myself up and went for a slow stroll to usual pig/bird places and saw some beautiful emerald green leaf birds but failed to get photos. It was nice not having to rush back as I have no morning lectures. I finished preparing lectures, interrupted on the roof by hints of showers, and was then interrupted by Previous Year Biochemistry students – 2 girls 2 boys - come to invite me to be chief guest at their special farewell function for the departing seniors. I asked what they expected me to do. “just make a 10 minute speech sir; give us your invaluable advice”. They then demanded my CV which I wrote out for them. A very nice group of students [the chief boy was Shrikanth]. They then wanted to meet again so I said I could call at the hostel this evening but they said that was no good as the girls could not come so we arranged for them to come here this evening at 5.30. After they had gone I realised my headache had also gone – but my toothache returned again. I had a nice prev year lecture on regulation of nitrogen fixation in my usual 2.0 slot then was driven back to hostel by one of the research scholars who drove ridiculously fast. The assistant who lives in thumulagunta said that the reason he was not there on Saturday when I had planned to arrange a visit, was that Chandrasekhar’s grandmother was dying so they were busy. He is very keen for me to visit some time and his mother is very keen to ‘cook some special items for you’. I hope I will be able fit him in somehow. He gave me 12 sheets of paper which I had to sign in about 3 places each – all to get my money. It seems I will be paid expenses for the whole period of 41 days here [about 17,000 rupees]. After my lecture I at last got down to refereeing the Mary genome paper, which was not too difficult but it seems Mila has not taken to heart my Grumpy old man stuff at the GRC conference at Oxford. So I have to make the same argument again – for good biochemistry, with pathways that have a beginning and an end etc. Twenty minutes earlier than expected about 12 students arrived and saw me sitting in my shorts [only] on the roof so the girls rushed down the corridor averting their eyes and giggling while I went in, dressed and cleared up the room to make space for them all. I sat in my armchair with

Shrikanth sitting opposite and the boys on my right and girls on the left. Of course I took a load of photos then had to show them family photos and the girls especially wanted to see the pictures of Ramachandran which I had shown to the first four students in the morning. They did not say why. I then had to do my usual entertaining stuff and they were good fun. I did get them to tell me who are the best two lecturers – prof Thyagaraju and Appa Rao. I then tried to auction Shrikanth who I think is quite good looking but I could only get 50 rupees for him. I think he is too dark for the girls, who think “you are such a beautiful colour sir”. They suddenly leapt up to go at 6.15 as the girls had to get back to the hostel. After I had filmed them all going down the stairs waving goodbye I slumped back into my chair only to be dragged up again by Shrikanth who had run back so say thank you so much for your kindness – I will treasure your friendship for ever – followed by a shy hug and off he ran. As the breeze had come up I went for a cool evening stroll up the path toward the hills with the crows all flocking down to roost, chatting raucously about the events of their day. *[I am writing this at 7.30 waiting for Sudarshan who phoned earlier to arrange to come at 7.00 to say goodbye and go to dinner]*. Lunch veggies today were undercooked and overspiced diced potato with chillies and mixed leaves as they say in our menus. Of course the leaves were coarse little twiggy things and probably should be weeded out before eating. I only had 2 chappatis and am now wishing I had been a little less abstemious. I still have some chocolate I could have but that might aggravate my tooth. *[I have just called sudarshan who was at his home in Trichanur, sorry he could not come but a friend came from Chennai; he didn't say why he had not troubled to phone. So I suppose it is off to Harry's Cove for a quick dinner, then back for an early night]*. I had a nice prawn biriani [pronounce prarn] and had yet another failure when I asked for ice cream and got the bill. Outside I met one of the group of biochemistry students I had thought of calling on but he said they were all out [preparing my farewell function it later turned out]. So I called in to see Hare Krishna and Chaitanya [my two virology friends]. Back at guest house my tooth was annoying so was feeling a bit sorry for myself then had a brainwave and watched my one DVD film of Mona Lisa, a great film. This was interrupted by my Hyderabad friends Shiva and Shankar, come to tell me they would be leaving early Thursday morning so would I take photos. Shankar was very shy and said it wasn't his idea. Pity we did not meet up earlier as they make a nice change from students.

Tuesday 20th February. Woke to a bright sunny morning so went off for my usual morning stroll accompanied by hoopoes flapping like butterflies and a mongoose who trotted along beside me before realising I was there and diving off into the undergrowth. I even got a good picture of an emerald green leaf bird and saw a beautiful black headed oriole. *[I am writing this Tuesday evening listening to Beethoven quartet 59/1 and getting more worried about my tooth; Imran is coming tomorrow so I may get him to find a dentist]*. The geezer [?] has stopped working so didn't do my planned washing. There was a lovely breeze so I sat outside and finished writing notes for my refereeing job, interrupted pleasantly by a very contrite Sudarshan who stayed chatting till lunchtime. He is the best company here as he has an interest in Indian history and politics and on US where he is now working. After lunch I gave a difficult lecture on Attenuation to Previous students who continue to impress with their punctuality and almost full attendance. I had needed my methylotroph book for my refereeing but it had been borrowed by my biochemistry visitor yesterday [Shrikanth] so I called into biochemistry and one of the office people went and dragged him out of a seminar for which he was grateful, insisting on taking me off on his little scooter to the hostel where he failed to find it before driving me back to the guest house where we had a nice chat before he remembered he should be in his seminar. So back to refereeing in the cool shade on the roof. It is getting to the end of my visit so I am making sure I do all the things I like best so I went for a beautiful walk around the dairy farm, hurrying back for 6.30 when I remembered my plan that I would eat with Subramanian and walk round to Surya's family to say hello and perhaps goodbye. At 6.20 Sai Gopal arrived with a lecturer from another local university microbiology department. He had told him that I would visit and give a lecture there. My only free morning is tomorrow and Imran is expected some time then so I refused. I told him that I was expecting Subramanian [a teaching fellow] and off they went. Subramanian

eventually arrived at 8.0; Sai Gopal had gone back to the lab and thoughtlessly [I hope it wasn't malicious] asked him to do something for him which delayed him more than an hour. This delay did mean that I was in when Shiva and Shankar came to say goodbye. My tooth had got worse and so I was rather irritable when he arrived. It wasn't his fault and we went off down to Sinduri park for a nice dinner followed by happy stroll through the temple area and auto home. As planned Shrikanth turned up with my book and we had a nice chat about his family – his father is a police constable with very little education. He then had to rush off to help his friends prepare the Biochemistry function at which I am to be chief guest. Then with a gentle hug "I will come to see you tomorrow surely, you are my new best friend sir". Even that didn't get rid of my toothache [mild but irritating and occasionally painful]. It's odd that I go to bed with toothache and it has gone by morning; it then develops during the day and is worst in the evenings. I have just realised that I will be home in a week's time – wonderful.

Wednesday 21st. Last night my toothache got worse so I decided I had to face the prospect of finding a dentist. I phoned the insurance number and, after about 20 rounds of the sugar plum fairy, I was told this was only really necessary for them to check I was not doing anything too expensive etc. In the morning the toothache was gone but I called Prof Srinivasulu who took me to the health centre where I was marched in front of ill people to meet the Chief Medical Officer who I had met casually earlier in the week. He peered into my mouth with a huge torch which was only just giving a feeble yellow light. He prescribed antibiotics and painkillers and arranged for me to go to the dental surgeon in the afternoon. For a week I had been told by Imran to keep Wednesday and Thursday free as he was coming to Tirupati and he would like me to go to a wedding reception with him. I had agreed as it would be his last visit and I haven't seen much of him. As arranged, he arrived late morning then stayed to lunch. I gave my last lecture which was half genetics and half chat and voting about arranged marriages etc. After my lecture he left to visit his friend and to make arrangements for the evening, promising to be back by about 6. I was taken by Satheesh to the health centre to attend the weekly clinic of the dental surgeon. Again I by-passed everyone and was inspected by a very nice lady dentist who performed the torture of tapping each tooth till I screamed – to find the faulty one. I have an infected root canal. She advised against removing the tooth as it is good and strong although having big old fillings. But the alternative would require 10 days work. She said the antibiotics should work very soon and I should have no immediate problems. Imran eventually called at 8 to say the reception was in Trichanur, 15km away, and that he would be staying there the night. I had rejected a couple of invitations for that evening and I was very hungry and so I was rather irritated. It was too late to make any arrangements so I hurried down to Harry's cove and had prawn byriani and ice-cream. The road lights were off at Balaji colony so I walked in the dark up to the student hostels. I was stopped by two students who were completely invisible to me [I was probably the only visible person]. They were two of our 1st years and were very pleased to see me. I was intending calling on Srikanth but was stopped by little Subbaiah in his lungi who grabbed my hand and dragged me off to his room where the usual crowd soon accumulated. As always they were very good company as we sat in a heap on the 3 adjacent beds. The main topic of chat was the hypothetical girlfriends of some of them. They then wanted to show off who is the strongest and were waving their muscles at me. They seem to know everything about each other- not surprising as they live almost literally on top of each other. When I tried to leave I was captured by Srinivas who pulled me off to the final year room and in they all trooped. I had not visited them before as they are rather a dull lot but nice enough. As we walked out on the little open balcony corridors Chaitanya leapt out of his room and grabbed me to take me to the guest house. This was very welcome – to have a single person to talk to. He explained that they all looked after each other; "for example Hare Krishna cannot sleep unless I am in the room – he looks after me so well". He left about an hour later promising to call the next day to see if I needed anything etc.

Thursday 22nd. Very good day after a shaky start. Imran called to say he would be calling in this morning. When I asked when this would be he told me he could not tell me because I would be angry if he was a tiny bit late. So I set off for my morning walk in a beautiful cool breeze on a clear sunny day. I was just about to get my long-hunted photo of a green leaf bird when Imran

called to say he was at the guest house with his friend and wanted to leave for Kadappah on his motorbike but needed the CD and Sudoku book I had promised so I had to come back and wave him off for another year. I decided I would not sulk but set off again and was rewarded by my best hoopoe picture and a beautiful walk. I then finished some washing and prepared my special lecture. There was some function here and so I was brought my lunch in my room. It included some record spicy chicken and a tin of green slimy lentils. In the afternoon I finished typing the referees report on mila & Mary's paper to send off tomorrow. It is the time for farewells so autoed out to Thumalagunta but walked on past to the next village and beyond with the usual quota of photos. It was school going home time so had lots of boys and girls on bikes in uniform waving hello uncle. Finally called in to say goodbye to Balaji and his mother and sister and then back here. Chaitanya had asked yesterday if he could come this evening so I called and asked him to come to town and help me with some shopping etc (more pills, a bag for Gopi to put his bits of stuff in). When I called I got Hare Krishna (nick name buddha for obvious reasons) who was very sensitive and asked if I really just wanted Chaitanya to come so I told him no I want you both if you like so they soon turned up with a third – Sreedar who is a tall hairy but handsome student who studied only in Telugu medium and so struggles to understand. He is very popular with the other students who told me he is the most handsome in the class. They had the sense to tell the auto to wait so we soon went off down town to Kalyan for dinner which was very good and which Hare Krishna insisted on paying half of. Susai happened to be there so I achieved a great thing and got him to help Ravi get my bill for leaving here so I could settle it by credit card this evening instead of the awful chore of stopping off at the hotel as soon as we leave the guest house. Susai also told me that Surya's mother is not back yet from Vijayawada, saving us an unnecessary walk. So we went and bought pills from an incredibly competent pharmacy and then down the road to buy a bag. This is to put the bits of electric stuff – table light, loudspeakers etc for Gopi to take back from Mahabalipuram. They got me a 20% discount so it cost less than £5 and is very good quality. It was tested by Chaitanya who wrenched it in all ways, encouraged by the sales assistant who just said no problem hit it hit it. Then a nice stroll down Ghandi road and back here for more photos. Hari Krishna orchestrated a load of photos to determine who had the best muscles out of Sreedar and Chaitanya. [just fellsound sleepso will sfop now].

Friday 23rd feb. Another beautiful clear breezy morning so did my usual morning stroll as a sort of farewell and saw a forest wagtail in the same place as last year; this is a bird that should not be in this part of India. Came back for a nice breakfast of idlis and pakora and my book but was then disturbed by prof Mahadevan, just back from Delhi where he had a very useful time impressing people he said. He wanted to arrange a farewell dinner but I said I was booked up so he said we would have a farewell breakfast tomorrow at 8.30 to which I agreed. *[I have just found a note under my door from him saying that "as per our agreement of this morning we will go with my friend in his car to have a special breakfast at the Bliss hotel". So this morning's walk was the last one it seems.* This morning was the Farewell function of the biochemistry juniors for their seniors to which I was invited as Chief guest. It was at 10.15 so I walked in the hot morning to arrive at exactly 10.15. Of course nothing was ready except the welcome sign and I was quickly met by Shrikanth who took me by the hand into the room where they were only just putting out chairs. Then Prof Thyagaraju came and dragged me up to the roof to stand in the sun and admire the view which was in fact admirable but a bit hot. We then waited half an hour for the Principle to arrive and then we started with a sweet girl singing a prayer like a muted warbler singing from the bottom of a bush. I was then led up to the platform to sit waiting my turn to speak. The Principal preached a little sermon about self discipline – including always being punctual. I then preached about bad driving and crash helmets and a few other bits. I was then presented with a nice shawl and yet another god. After that the other staff wandered off leaving me to sit at the table with assorted student groups for photos. Most of these students I hadn't met before but they still had to have their photos with sir. At last I was able to chat briefly with Shrikanth who was running around constantly getting it all working well. I was then ushered into a room and made to sit. They had decided to provide lunch for staff but we had to wait for

the Principal. 45 minutes later he phoned to say he wasn't coming. Lunch was on banana leaves and was good although I had to use crisps to scoop up rice in the absence of a spoon. The staff (Parthasarathy, murthi, Reddy and Appa Rao were their usual dull selves irritating me by mocking the students attempts to provide us with a nice lunch. In fact it was a nice lunch and they did a great job considering that they were held up by the ill mannered Principal. I attempted to call to see the students where they were having snacks – to say thank you- but was told they would not want to be disturbed so Murthi would drive me back. One of the nice girls [who met Libby] heard this being arranged and whispered that they wanted me to visit but I was bullied away. For therapy I washed my brown bedsheet as it was to be passed on to Gopi's family, and then finished preparing my MV Naidu memorial lecture for the afternoon. I then lay on the bed and fell fast asleep before being picked up by Chandrasekar to take me to the Zoology Department lecture theatre, calling in for tea with the Principal who was some functionary at my lecture. After we were all assembled he did an excellent job on talking about Naidu, telling how he once went on hunger strike until the VC gave him more space for virology. I was then presented with a framed certificate, complete with a rather gaunt picture of me on it with a picture of Naidu, then I was given a peacock brass plate and then another shawl and a garland; the Principle sat beside me presenting me with this stuff for photos and then I was showered with small yellow petals and told to give my lecture. This seemed to go well and there were even a few good questions after. At the end there was the usual deflationary effort of Sai Gopal who waved away the students in order to get me talking to a visiting professor. The result of this was I was unable to say goodbye to Subramanian who was off to Hyderabad for some entrance exam, and I was unable to see my other friends and was again whisked back to the guest house. So I sat in the setting sun on the roof reading Sacred Games [Vikram Chandra]. As I scooted out of the department I called to Suresh to call on his way home to see me. He is the office helper who had wanted me to visit his family in Thumulagunta, this plan always failing because Sai Gopal made him stay until he himself wanted to leave, and this was often late. Anyway at about 7 he turned up together with his other helpers, Chandrasekar and X (the older rather sulky dark man who makes my tea). We were soon interrupted by two first year students – Sudarkar and little Subbaiah, bringing a CD for me to copy photos on to. The two groups got on well and I remembered I still had most of the last bar of chocolate which I then distributed [what a good host]. The helpers then left me to entertain the two students. Sudarkar was trying to get me to allow him to come to Mahabalipuram but I explained it was Gopi's treat and he was very shy etc. Dear Subbaiah kept jumping up to hug me, the last time with little tears wetting my shirt "you have taken my heart sir – please take me with you". Ok no problem. While on the roof I had remembered that I must see Sudarshan before I go so we arranged to meet at Sinduri Park at 8.0. I arrived at exactly 8.00 as did he. We had a nice north Indian thali and gentle sensible grown up conversation. I am now back to my garland smelling room watching the big black ants running around my feet and waiting for Srikanth. I have just remembered I still have some british airways wine so as I am feeling twitchy I will have that and read. Good night.

Saturday 24th February. My last day in Tirupati. *[I am writing the remainder of this diary back home, so it will be filtered by memory loss].*

Yesterday Prof Mahadevan was back and keen to arrange a farewell dinner. When I said there was no time he said that we would celebrate over breakfast today at 8.30. Last night I had a letter on headed notepaper tucked under my door saying that "as per our mutual arrangement yesterday he has arranged to go with me and a friend with a car to Bliss Hotel for breakfast at 7.45". So as I was awake at 6.30 I got up and went for my last morning Tirupati walk. A beautiful slightly cool morning with the rising sun lighting up the hills and the tops of the trees. The usual place near the horse ground was full of koels, bulbuls, magpie robins and orioles singing. I even saw a new bird – called a green pigeon in my small book but in the bigger book it is a thick footed green pigeon. The hoopoes, which are nesting around here [from the fact that they are usually carrying food in their beaks], only became visible when I scared them away and they fluttered up like huge butterflies. I took a lot of pictures of orioles near the pig farm – in a tall broad leafed tree. I nearly forgot my date and got back just in time to find Mahadevan and his

friend, Head of business studies, waiting in the foyer. I rushed upstairs and changed into a clean shirt etc and off we went in an air-conditioned Ford Escort that I was assured was entirely imported only – except for some reason its tyres. They were both very noisy in telling me that every major manufacturer of cars in the world now made cars in India so why he was so keen to impress me with his imported Escort I don't know. The Bliss is a huge newish hotel with uniformed flunkies and grovelling restaurant bosses. Anand looked like a caricature of a post-war spiv with a little moustache and greasy Italian hair. He gave the poor restaurant staff a hard time as he engineered our breakfast – all the usual Indian items [idlis, puris, pakora, dosas] but to be delivered to the table at the same time. A good idea as it gave us a personal buffet but they did not get the idea so he kept sending stuff back. It was excellent, with fresh pineapple juice and a big cup of black coffee. We drove back by a different route, further from the centre and developing fast. They were bewailing the fact that so many people were moving into Tirupati but that very little industry was moving in with them. I think that is the one good thing about the development. At the hotel and guest house I did my usual photograph thing which is a convenient way of expressing gratitude and appreciation even when I don't really feel much enthusiasm for my companions. There was a delicious coolish wind and a sprinkle of clouds so I was self indulgent and sat on the roof reading Sacred Games [by Vikram Chandra], confident that I would not run out of reading before leaving; I have been rationing myself with this. One of the best books on India I have read. *[I later had to leave its 900 heavy pages with Gopi who promised to try to read the first chapter in case he liked it enough to use it to improve his English]*. This morning was 'Clean and Green' day so all the departments in the university were tidying and gardening. A pity the guest house does not get involved and remove some of the poly bags from the garden. I gave 100 rupees to Suri to give to the lady cook but wasn't sure that he had understood. Later Madhu checked and he had understood. Sai Gopal turned up later to present me with two packets of rupees, a total of 17,000 rup based on 41 days which generously included the time Libby was here. Guests were expected at lunch time so the place smelled appetizingly of cooking vegetables and spices which had occupied a lot of extra staff sitting on the floor cutting them up earlier. As usual I was brought my lunch to my room – some chopped veggies with chillies, chapattis and rather unpleasant looking green slimy dahl which tasted good. After lunch I drifted about cleaning up and throwing out stuff and starting to pack. I was collected at 3.30 for my farewell function by Chandrasekhar my favourite driver. Usually this function is organised by the first year students to say farewell to their seniors and I am thrown in as a bonus but this year the final students did not organise a welcome function for the freshers so they decided to reciprocate so I had my own function. The chief guest was again the principal who actually arrived on time together with the other guest who was head of microbiology at the Vet college. The function was much better organised than usual and so started on time. The starting prayer was sung by two gentle girls who did a brilliant job of the very fast passages and strange slow swoops up unfamiliar intervals. Libby phoned just before the start so I could pass on a message from her. I was soon laden down with a magnificent garland of flowers which I wore throughout; the others usually reject them and put onto the table in front. Chaitanya who is a bit of an artist had drawn decorations all over the board and marigolds were hung down the corridor as a welcome. There were the usual speeches by the principal and other guest telling the students how lucky they were to work in such a good department etc. the students then took turns to make little speeches usually beginning "dear friends and staff and guests and beloved guru professor Chris Anthony and one and all". One eloquent girl was "very privileged to take part on this joyful occasions". I later objected that I did not understand why they were so joyful that I was leaving "oh no sir not that way sir" from the speaker. I was then presented by both years of students with an identical present – a 2kg model of the Tirumula temple with lights and Om sounds as in the one in the foyer of the guest house. I eventually managed to bring one home and the other at the suggestion of Hare Krishna I donated to the department. I was also presented with the usual shawl which was especially nice, and then had to sit wearing it for photos. Far more students now have cameras but not many seem to know how to use them. A single snap took ages as the photographer moved everyone around. When I took pictures they were always amused that I had

finished almost before they were lined up. The guests at the front were then fed a sort of puff pastry veggie thing and a milk sweet which was wonderful together with a flimsy plastic cup of Thums Up. Sai Gopal then led everyone out so that I could have an ‘informal interaction’ with the students. This meant loads of photos and autographs – including one on the arm of little Subbaiah [please remember your friend chris] which then had to be photographed while he hung on to me, wiping tears off his long eyelashes. Remembering the feeling of anticlimax in previous years when it was so difficult to make evening arrangements I took Hari Krishna aside and asked him to arrange dinner at the Harry Cove with Chaitanya, Subbaiah, Sudarkar [who would have gate crashed anyway] and Sreedar; he then checked that he was also invited. They all came back anyway together with a few others including Babachan, a gentle Muslim boy who asked permission to say goodbye in his traditional way – three half hug/half kisses. I told him it was a beautiful tradition and was repaid by three more. Chaitanya then dismissed most of the others and helped me to pack before we all went down to Balaji colony to dinner which was nice and simple with veg biriani and ice cream, with tall thin Chaitanya eating up everything that anyone left. “They use me as their rubbish bin sir”. “Better than throwing your rubbish over the wall” – “oh we do that with him later sir”. They came back for more photos and chat and they all left except for Chaitanya and Hare Krishna who said they would wait for Madhu to arrive, immediately going to sleep on the other bed, eventually woken by Madhu creeping gently in at 11.30. As usual he had nothing except his toothbrush with him and was rather cold. After waking the others they did their usual nice introductions saying their names and what they did, before more sad goodbyes and off they went. Madhu was a little subdued as he saw me all packed up to go. I asked him what he usually did on his one day off on Sunday and he said “I am with you only chris I must now do something different isn’t it”. Of course, he had started his job after I arrived and had come every Saturday night since. We had a sleepy chat for about an hour before actually sleeping.

Sunday 25th February. Up early for last bit of packing and a bath for Madhu as I went down for my last bread omelette before Gopi arrived exactly as promised at 8.15. The car had arrived at 7.30 as promised and Sai Gopal arrived on time at 8.30. Sad saying goodbye to gentle Madhu who came with us down to Balaji colony. Although I had asked the driver Arjun to go the nice short cut way he went thought the middle of town “because there is not traffic”. Not the point. He managed to find a route through Trichanur so that we could stop and see his family – wife and two small kids. So I took photos and off we went. We had a good drive of 5 hours to Mahabalipuram with short break at a roadside place for Gopi to have idlis for breakfast and another 10 minute break for the driver to have a rest. We arrived at 1.30 and were allocated the last room in the poolside row [no. 20] which was newer than others and had proper hot water, tele etc. We soon had a nice lunch [prawn curry and chicken biriani] in the open restaurant. Gopi asked to face outwards – he had not seen the sea before. So we then went over to introduce him to the Bay of Bengal. He then went to sleep while I read under a tree. We did the long walk into M but arrived too late to take nice evening sun photos. We walked around the shore temple on the rocks and to the crowds on the other side lining up to enjoy the breaking waves. We walked up to look at Arjuna’s penance where the dance festival had been held and could just make out the carving well enough for Gopi to be impressed. We wandered back into the tourist packed roads, accompanied by a large silent owl. I decided I would at last go to the famous Moonrakers restaurant [best seafood atmosphere etc]. It must have been damaged by its popularity. We were shown upstairs to the only remaining table and ordered mineral water. This didn’t come and after about 15 minutes we realised that no one had food on their tables and it was obviously going to be a long evening so we left, to the surprise of the young waiter who had not even troubled to take our order. Good decision as we went back to Golden Sun and had a lovely dinner of fish and chips for me and chicken kurma for Gopi. After sitting on the shore for a while we wandered back for an early night. Gopi had caught the driver’s cold – he coughed and spluttered all the way from Tirupati. I later caught it, starting on the flight home.

Monday 26th February. Puris for breakfast in a restaurant with one table of Americans and the other all Russians. Gopi was still feeling unwell so he sat under the shelter on the shore while I

had a beautiful swim. We called off our planned trip into Mahabalipuram to look at carvings etc as Gopi was feeling bad. He was very concerned to tell me that we would go if I wanted to but I was quite pleased to just wander a little on the beach and lie on a sunbed [new addition to the hotel] in the garden, eventually finishing Sacred Games. In the late afternoon Sudarker arrived with two friends. He had asked earlier where I was staying but I had told him not to come. HE said he was visiting friends in Chennai but I do not know if this was true. When I got up in the morning I found I had a strained back muscle [probably from my neck exercises]. I was then nervous that it might develop like the one that was so painful a few months earlier. So I was not in a good mood to chat to Sudarker who had always been a little too possessive. I managed to say the right things and apologised that I could not spend more time with them and sent them off and went back into the room only to find that they had gone to the front and rung the bell to wake up Gopi who was then made to give his phone number and email address. We then had the usual horrible job of packing and discarding stuff. Gopi was as usual good company in this and very sensible. I left him with loads of stuff but still only just got everything in – main problem being the model Temple. In fact the whole operation was quite easy and we drifted over to another nice dinner of veg biriani and gobi masala, before checking out [rather just paying bills], having a last long sit on the shore, discussing why waves break, and then back for a long dozy chat and sleep to be woken at 11.45 to be told the car was ready. The driver lost his way in Chennai and we had to stop once for me to have a pee by the road. The driver did not want to stop so Gopi insisted. So he spitefully stopped in middle of road on a roundabout so I had to stand in the open in middle of roundabout to have my pee – great relief, before hitting the airport for a hurried goodbye and off home. British airways were excellent as usual, with staff coming up to arriving passengers, checking names and directing. They also overlooked the fact that my baggage was 29kg instead of 22kg. Had a good flight home, sitting next to a nice Indian lady doctor. Good to see Libby; it was nice to know that she understood the odd effects of returning from India to uk. The stress and events of the journey home somehow separate the two places and it all seems a dream, with sadness at leaving special friends and leaving all the colour, noise, smells, taste, heat, dust but most of all the goodwill, kindness and friendship.

I have just finished editing this in January 2008 in time to return to Tirupati next week.

