

# Aravind 2013 - Postcard 10



Sunday, Monday, Tuesday 13-15 October 2013

**SUNDAY - NAVARATRI FEVER!**

more powerful than any tyrant". Do you think they are talking to teenagers and their parents?

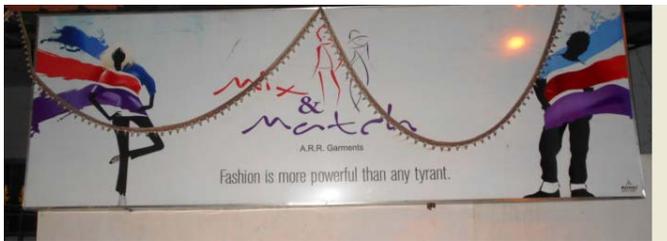
**Meenakshi Nagar Temple, 9.910263,78.147376**



The Institutue celebrated Navatri on Saturday with a dance at the end of the day on Saturday; with Sunday being a Day of Rest. I took it quite easy on Sunday, visiting the Temple and hiring an English guide to get some information about the festival.

## **MORNING RUN**

What I took away on Saturday was less about the Festival, and more about the significance of the Meenakshi Amman Temple in modern India: It was here that Mahatma Gandhi refused to enter the temple because members of the lowest (untouchable) chaste could not enter.



Laura, every time I go by this billboard, I think of you. I think I have seen this campaign in the US as well but if you can't read the text at the bottom, it reads "Fashion is

My morning run is starting to become a regular route, to the Meenakshi Nagar temple from Aravind. It is a great place to go because it has broad sidewalks and lots of walkers in the morning, strolling along talking to each other. Ken Bassett PhD first brought me here. He is a Canadian epidemiologist, and when we were approaching I was desperately trying to determine if we were supposed to run clockwise or anticlockwise. It looked about 50/50, which is the logical thing to do if part of the purpose of getting out is to run into someone you know. I allowed as I have been yelled at in places (Central Park NYC, Crissy Field SF) for either running were only dog walkers were allowed, or in the wrong direction etc. Ken said that this is the thing that is most argued where he lives as well, especially such nuances as whether skateboarders should be classed as rollerbladers or bicyclists!

## MUNICIPAL MUSEUM



I went to visit the Ghandi museum, but unfortunately it was closed for the Festival. However, the Madurai Municipal Museum (it looks like it was constructed for gangs of schoolchildren to troop through) featured a lot of archeology, and for the boys in the crowd (more on this later) a collection of snakes in a jar, including a two headed snake (farthest left). Suganya does not believe that there is such a thing. She also does not believe that any capsulorhexis I construct is big enough, so the girl is full of disbelief.



I can just see some local hunter bagging a Polar Bear, and his wife saying “Not in My House!- Take it to the museum!”



Kids everywhere love T-Rex!

## The Second Scariest Thing I have seen recently:



Nine stories of bamboo scaffolding, not tied in to the structure in any way I could discern!

## The Scariest Thing I saw in the last 3 days:



Note the child seat, complete with grab bar.

At least it is bolted down; I have seen the kids standing on the platform and helping to steer.

## Monday – Light Day in OR, Blessing of Instruments

As I said in the earlier email that was so brief, I got back from my run and was told to be in the OR at 7:30. It was 7:20. There were no scheduled cases, so trainee cases could start earlier. In the afternoon, there was a special event- the blessing of the tools.



Towards the end of the day, there were a series (Inpatient ward, Free Hospital, Camp Hospital) of ceremonies to conclude Navaratri and to bless the tools that are used in every day work. It certainly reminded me of my youth pre Vatican-II. I snuck my laptop and fundus lenses into the pile.

## TOUR OF LIVE WELL

The big surprise of the day was an invitation to Harapriya and Aravind's country home, on a former orchard about 25 km from the hospital. It is also the site of "Live Well" rehabilitation center, started by Aravind and Haripriya.

I was aware how hard it would be to live here and be debilitated in any significant way. There are a couple of people tooling around in wheelchairs that are more like hand-cranked tricycles, being pushed by very robust individuals. If you have suffered a stroke this is not the city to go for a walk while you try to recover.

Aravind recognized that the population of India is aging, and there is a near complete lack of health care facilities devoted to care of the elderly and rehabilitation. He is an analytical guy, and without a doubt the fastest phaco surgeon I have ever seen – and here he is, building a rehab facility to pilot a business model that is sustainable and affordable for his country. He said "people describe medicine as being one of three types: the pit stop (that would be the ER), the assembly line (that would be Aravind Eye Hospital), and slow

medicine. This is slow medicine." The facility is beautiful, wheelchair accessible, with garden paths that encourage activity.



Here is a wheelchair accessible meditation area. Dinner was a blast- I finally got up the nerve to ask how to eat with my fingers. It is all in using your thumb as a pusher!



Haripriya, her Mother, Nethra, Aravind, and Arya.



I'm afraid I will never get invited back: after dinner, I spend most of the time talking with Arya, trading stories about snakes (he is fascinated with them, and Arizona is full of them), Lego Mindstorm, and how to pop a wheelie (wearing a helmet, of course!).

It was a great evening.

Regards, Joe [jmiller@eyes.arizona.edu](mailto:jmiller@eyes.arizona.edu)