

# Aravind 2013 Postcard 12



17-23 October 2013

## RAIN!

It has been raining a lot, the Tank around the Temple has begun to fill (there is a pump to move the water from the river, across the street, and into the pond); and along with the rain I have been under the weather so no postings for the past several days. Starting around Tuesday of last week, I had a building headache along with myalgia, back pain; Wednesday a petechial rash on my legs; and around Thursday pain with eye movement. Surgeries went well, but Friday was tough to get through rounds (no AC). Happily Saturday was a lighter day for me; A tour of Aurolab and then to bed. Up on Sunday and felt great. I think I am taking some antibodies home as a souvenir.

## THURSDAY Oct 17, 2013– GRAND ROUNDS

Elephants bring good luck – I was happy to meet this young lady!



I gave Grand Rounds to the Aravind Eye Care System this past Thursday. The topic was “Astigmatism and

Pseudo-accommodation”; a talk to explain how being a little nearsighted and a little astigmatic helps people to go without glasses either becoming presbyopic (of an age where you need reading glasses...) or pseudophakic (after cataract surgery leads to lens implantation). I have personal knowledge of this topic; my refraction is  $(-0.75 +0.50 \times 090)$  each eye, and I am as happy as a free range goat in Madurai. Seldom do I need reading glasses. The optics of this phenomenon have been well understood since the IOL revolution began in the 1970's, and is being rediscovered again.



Suganya (Senior Resident who is my Instructor) and Pangchavarnam (Head Sister, who runs the OR).



Dr. Prajna, head of GME, hosted rounds. He made me promise “No Maths”. Promise Kept.

**FRIDAY October 18, 2013**



Dr. Usha, chief of oculoplastic surgery, sure attracts a crowd in the Operating Room. She says that it is because people can see what she is doing. In talking with her, I heard a recurring theme- that while she performs oculoplastic surgery, she does her share of cataracts –that share being about 60 phacos a week before she can start her plastics cases. “I love doing cataract surgery”, she said, “it is so peaceful. I can relax my mind, my eyes and fingers do the work”. She feels that way because she is not trying to teach the likes of me cataract surgery.

**SATURDAY October 19, 2013 (Day 14)**

### **AUROLAB TOUR**



One of the most remarkable stories of market disruption in ophthalmology I have ever heard was the story of how IOLs came to be affordable to the common Indian. Dr. V and his colleagues were very early to identify the value of IOL implantation for the poor. The alternative, aphakia, leaves the patient blind if they do not have their “coke-bottle” glasses. However, when IOLs were introduced, the cost was such that regardless of volume, the price was out of reach. The Aravind directors acquired IOL technology from a small manufacturer in

Florida, and in a room in the Outpatient Clinic began to manufacture 3-piece, lathe turned PMMA IOL’s for the internal use of Aravind Eye Hospital. There was great criticism from established ophthalmology against doing IOL surgery, and data proved the detractors wrong. Over time, the IOLs manufactured by Aurolab have made modern cataract surgery affordable to millions, and that first lathe, purchased decades ago, is still in operation making 3 piece PMMA lenses. I know- I saw it in operation, along with a modern clean room environment that is state-of-the-art in every respect. Sorry, no pictures allowed.

Got back from the tour at noon, hurried to OR to find no surgery – slow week because of the festival.

**SUNDAY October 20, 2013**

### **Souvenir Shopping**



“All the Aravind Out-of-Towners use P. Kannan as their tailor. Go to Pudumandapam near the East Gate of Meenakshi Temple, find Pooncholai at Raisya Botique, and she will introduce you”. As per usual, the next thing I new, I had met Poonacholai’s children (Sofia is the eldest daughter, with brothers Arunachalam and little Vasiparan). Note my great find- a hand crafted fan. Ok, there are several peacocks running around a park feeling a little undressed, but the guy had me- it was the only fan I had found in all of Madurai. I paid x, and when Pooncholai heard what I paid, she tracked him down and made him throw in the second fan, immediately claimed by her youngest son.

Ever the optimist, the vendor then started working on Ms Katie and Ms Stebanie, other Aravind guests who had taken me to buy clothing. “Are you sure you don’t want this beautiful chess set?”. For some reason, Stephanie (Stebanie) was much more convincing in her “no” than was Katie.



The Sunday Evening surprise was coming upon a celebration of some sort in what looked like a public covered auditorium.



We went to the Gandhi Museum just in time to learn that it was observing Holiday Hours. Gandhi is a prominent figure everywhere in India, but in Madurai he refused to enter the Meenakshi Temple if members of the Untouchable caste were forbidden to enter.



Across the street was a Childrens Park. The three of us wandered in and the next thing we knew, we were marched up to sit in the front row.



Yep, that is us - the three gringos – in the front row, helping to celebrate the arrival of a team of relay bicycle riders that had over the last 10 days or so covered about 400 KM, promoting (as best we could figure from the performances on stage) religious tolerance, ethical behavior, and staying away from alcohol and drugs.



**My Big Score- A fan with a story!**

TUESDAY OCTOBER 22, 2013



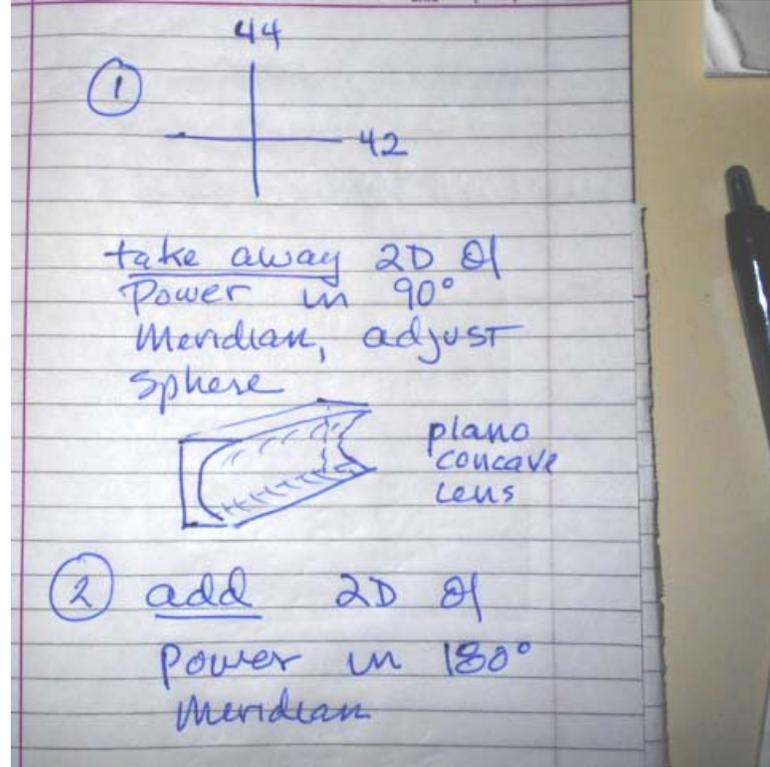
Apparently somebody thought we were guests of honor, but finally noticed that we - (ok the two young ladies I was accompanying) - were not wearing ribbons and sashes. It was a great deal of fun, but finally we snuck out and got back to the guest house.

Monday October 21, 2013



Monday I was feeling much better, and there were patients for surgery. I was also asked to give additional lectures in pediatrics, and so the day started to pile up quickly. I was known to be leaving soon, so there were a lot of last minute requests, and at the same time, things that I wanted to check out. Like the rooms that are provided to paying patients in the inpatient block. As you can see, they are simple, spare, and clean. People pay more for rooms that have Air Conditioning, and there are suites available for families to stay. Key point- you get to choose what you would like to spend.

Another lecture – this time on Toric IOLs. I was asked to describe how given pre op keratometry, and post-op refraction, you could determine what axis error (if any) had occurred with IOL placement. This is one of the incredibly geeky things that I actually know how to do, and so it was nice to be able to contribute something back... but it was a lecture that had not been written.



Ultimately Power Point took a back seat to the chalk talk. I wrote the talk in a notebook while waiting for my cases to start, and just before the class took pictures and stuck them into PowerPoint. Just-in-time manufacturing, “Welcome to India!”

**What’s Next?**

I have completed about two and a half weeks in Madurai, and am about to “transfer” to another institution, The Aravind Eye Hospital in Pondicherry. Pondicherry is now known as Puducherry; if you google it you will find it spelled both ways. After the British “left”, the country has returned many of its cities to their original names.

Madurai is the “home” of the Aravind organization, and there is a lot going on here. The LAICO institute has been buzzing all of October with the meetings and summit that occur on an annual basis. At the same time, Pondicherry is the newest facility, and is in a very interesting former French Colony, and home to the Sri Auribindo Ashram and Auroville. Details to follow!

Regards, Joe jmillar@eyes.arizona.edu