

Strike Day- Tuesday

Pala, Kerala, India - February 19, 2008

Amy:

I woke up and realized that Brent wasn't there. He had taken an early-morning walk around, but he came back for breakfast a little later. [Naresh: I wandered around the property. Highlights were a nice spider web and bottles of booze growing from a tree —they'd showed us



Web

on the first day that they enclose near-ripe fruits in plastic to keep the insects and birds away in a non-pesticide



Fruit or Hooch?

fashion, I guess that works for booze too?]

We had breakfast – bananas, toast (with butter and jam), and egg curry and papadams, with the eggs in the egg curry from their hens! It's amazing how much of the food comes from their animals or garden. The milk is from the cow, eggs from the hens, cinnamon and cardamom from the garden, coconut milk and meat from the coconut tree.

Since this was "strike day" no one went to work and daughter Sona didn't go to school. We didn't see much of her, though, b/c I think she was helping her grandmother with the cooking and housework. Brent had a list of things that he wanted to do: learn how to wear a lungi/dhoti/(or whatever you call the man-towel-loincloth thingy), climb a coconut tree, and get water from the well.

After breakfast, Simi and Manoj and I looked at maps and tried to arrange our trip to Cochin (for tomorrow). The Cochin airport, where we were flying from to Hyderabad, is actually far from the city, about 45 km. They convinced me to take a bus to a town near the airport instead of to Cochin. I wanted to do some shopping for souvenirs, but they assured me that the other town (Amalgam) would have places to buy handicrafts. They said that traffic in and out of Cochin was bad and that we'd be better off avoiding the city. We looked at maps and they called the bus company; there was a 3-hour direct bus leaving Eeratupetta at 9:40 a.m, so we decided that we'd take that bus tomorrow.

After our planning session, Brent set out to do the items on his list (Yay! I'm so happy that he made a list!). First, he went with Manoj and came back wearing a man-skirt. Then, Simi came out carrying a beautiful sari and asked me if I



Local couple.

wanted to try it on. I agreed, and all the



men men men men



lovely lady

ladies in the house came to the other guest room to watch Simi put the sari on. There was a lot of wrapping and turning and fastening the sari and it was really hot. Simi gave me a bindi to wear on my forehead, and a beautiful

pearl necklace and bracelet. Brent and I felt kind of ridiculous. Well, I should say I felt ridiculous. Brent looked like he was born to wear a man-skirt, and he didn't want to take it off the rest of the day. We took lots of pictures, which the family loved. They



women women women

don't smile very much in pictures. In fact, they'll be laughing and smiling, then a camera comes out and everyone stops smiling. Maybe it's a cultural thing not to show teeth or something.



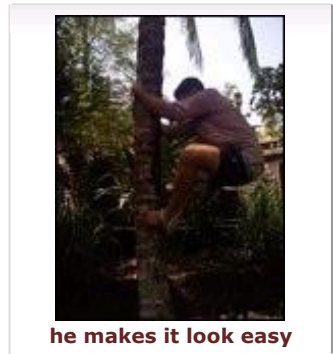
Surely you can't be serious.

I was getting overheated, so I took off the sari. I gave Simi the necklace and bracelet, and she said that she wanted to give me the bracelet as a present. I was really

touched! Brent kept his lungi on and then went in front of the house to climb a tree. Right before climbing, another "cousin" or neighbor came to the house



climber



he makes it look easy

just in time to witness the climb.

Manoj fastened a towel between Brent's feet and Brent sashayed up the tree. Kind of. He made it about four feet up, then stopped. The entire extended family and



way way way up there

neighbors had come outside to watch him. [Naresh: The view from four feet up in the tree was breathtaking; I could see all the way over to the next tree; and from up there all the people looked like ants--like really really huge people-sized ants. (I am reading this

days later and my legs are still very sore; how have I gone my entire life without ever before using my coconut-tree-climbing muscles?)]

After the climb, Brent moved on to the well, where he wanted to get water. The well was 30 feet deep (or so, it's hard to tell), but only a few feet deep during monsoon season. There's a bucket attached to a rope/pulley system. Within a few tries, Brent was able to bring a bucket all the way up.

Manoj was there to help him unharness the bucket, then he (Manoj) threw the water on the ground. Brent and I don't know why he did this – we thought that he'd use Brent's water in the house, as he did



hello hello hello...



water well

the other buckets of water. Anyway, we took some pictures of Brent's efforts, then went inside to rest after all the exciting events.

I told Simi that I wanted to milk a cow, and the entire family started laughing. Their maid is the one who does the "cow work" with some help from grandma. They said I'd need permission from both the maid and the cow. But I was determined, so I asked when the milking is done (in the morning and again at noon). I said that I could help at noon.

Naresh:

While we waited for cow-milking time we were shown easier ways to get coconuts. One was a long pole with a



clipper at the end, and the other was a skinny ladder pole.

Grampa [Amy: I like the grandfather, b/c he's thinks Brent is really funny and he seems to like watching him (not in a creepy way)]



demonstrated the retrieval of coconuts, until he had a lovely bunch of them, then he cut many open to get their juice and soft innards.

Within a few minutes these had been mixed together in a frothy drink.

Tasty.



Finally noon came around and it was the big moment Amy had all been waiting for: cow-milking time. A big crowd formed to watch, of course.

Amy and cow both performed admirably.



By the time we had lunch we'd been with the family long enough that they felt comfortable turning on the TV while we ate (poor Manoj, who loves cricket, was getting antsy because the big game India vs. Sri Lanka was on). I



stayed and watched for a while, but it was looking bad for India so I went into the hall to read. After a little while Manoj came in to alert us to the exciting development that India could win if they could score just two points

out of six throws. We rushed back to the TV just in time to see the Indian victory. Go India!



with cousin at church

In the evening, before dinner, we took a short trip to see their nearby church, school (where Saint Sister Alphonsa taught), and cemetery (where all members of a house share a crypt). Then we came back home for a few a few attempts at indoor cricket.



St Alphonsa's school



oop. are you okay?



that wouldn't be cricket?

After dinner, Sona performed a dance routine for us that she'd used to win an award in the school talent show.



I'd like to thank the academy...

With her cute dress, fancy moves, and singing along with the tape, she showed that she was



dancing

just about ready for Bollywood. The entertainment didn't end there. Sona next sang a song in Malayalam, although we didn't



song

understand most of that one because it wasn't composed of the few phrases we'd learned: "hello, what is your name, my name is, thank you, goodbye" Then Sona and Shon both recited a short poem. Shon enjoyed the

applause so much that he kept repeating the poem, although each time it got shorter and shorter until there was no poem remaining to recite. I then did my best to sing what I could remember of the High Hopes song about the ant and the rubber tree, which seemed appropriate for that locale ("Oops there goes another rubber tree plant").



duet

Apology to eight-year-old Sona: When you asked me to teach you an English song, and I came up with "Mairzy Doats and dozy doats" I don't know what I was thinking. Sorry about that. My correct response should have been "row row row your boat."

All in all it was quite a day. We were lucky to have got the gift of this bonus strike day, when we could go beyond the regular site-seeing stuff and just hang out with our new Kerala family.

Maybe the commies aren't so bad after all.

- Next entry: [Moonilavu to Hyderabad](#)
- Previous entry: [Moonilavu day over Papachan's](#)

- More Moonilavu Strike pictures [here](#)
- [Index of all blog entries](#)