

Temple Elephant

The temple towers over
the mayhem that is Madurai.
Intricate carvings adorn its sides
from ornate roof to dusty ground
where street vendors sit in shade
selling souvenirs and garlands.
Inside no peace, no calm but
a heaving mass of humanity
as tourists and worshippers
jostle for space in a sea
of bobbing heads.

A tinny bell rings out
to herald the entrance
of the holy elephant.
The crowd parts like the ocean
before a battleship
as the huge beast
forges a path through
the waiting crowd
placing one foot placidly
before another regardless
of the bare-footed crowd.
Awestruck faces peer up
the walls of its grey hide
to the fly-swatting ears
and the scented garland
adorning the giant neck,
The elephant sails serenely
through the awed throng
and enters the Inner Sanctum
without a backward glance.



Margaret Hardy
January 2023