

"NAL's Loco-Photo Man"



Mr B Satya Bhagawan, a science graduate who metamorphosed into a good programmer, began his NAL career with the Mathematical Sciences Group. Starting 1986, he spent a decade with the Flight Mechanics Group where he contributed to the simulation activity and also worked on neural networks. Before moving over to Structures division he did a nice job of decoding an aircraft data from an encrypted form.

I knew Satya Bhagawan since 1974 when we both became disciples of the same sitar maestro, Mr N Rama Rao -- himself a disciple of Pandit Ravi Shankar. This connection grew into a friendship and our bond became stronger through the medium of photography about which we were both crazy. Initially Bhagawan resented automatic cameras, and treated his Pentax K-1000 as the world's most sacred object, but he soon successfully mastered automatic cameras; especially after he bought himself a Canon EOS system. As was his wont, Bhagawan systematically went through the manuals of the camera and understood all its intricacies. He went on to become one of the best informal consultants on the Canon camera system.

Bhagawan was a man of varied interests. His greatest passion was steam locomotives; he talked about them with profound passion and reverence. Bhagawan photographed a number of steam locos in the railway yards at Bangalore, Mysore, Hubli, Dharwad, Harihar and other places and would often lament about the difficulties he faced with the railway bureaucracy. A story (perhaps apocryphal) of his passion for locos is that immediately after his marriage he asked his bride to pose in front of a steam loco.

Many of us probably didn't know of Bhagawan consummate skill at carving. He could make nice loco models out of chalk pieces or computer cards. He was especially skillful at making silhouettes on computer cards using his fingernails.

During his last years Bhagawan's obsession was Adobe Photoshop, the photo editing software, which he mastered. His "loco passion" combined wonderfully with Photoshop as Bhagawan meticulously restored his old B&W prints by scanning the negatives and performing a cosmetic "surgery" in which he removed the clutter of people, electric poles etc. in these pictures and even blended a nice cloudy background to aesthetically enhance the beauty of the loco. Mr C Rajagopal, the great photographer, was very appreciative of Bhagawan's work.

His photography spectrum was wide. His subjects included locos, birds, airplanes (only a few months back, he taught me the art of improving a badly shot picture of an airplane in flight), children and portraits. He was persistent in his approach. While living in Padmanabhanagar, Bhagawan spent many months photographing the sunset from a nearby hillock; prints of these photos were often displayed at Bangalore's photo labs. Bhagawan was a regular companion of the renowned wild life photographer Mr Hanumantha Rao on his trips to Kakkare Bellur and Bandipur, and his collection included some truly wonderful pictures of birds; a couple of them adorn NAL's S R Valluri Auditorium. Bhagawan also made innumerable portraits of Vidyabhushana Swamji, these were often used for the Swamiji's audio cassette covers.

Bhagawan was a lovable person who got along well with everyone. We will really miss him.

MS Rajamurthy