



Genre: Photography Exhibition

Details: A Long Exposure - Satyan's pictures are tranquil and leisurely. They carry a pining asceticism; reflect an uncluttered aesthetic enlightenment; they are pensive and reflective but never sad. And they are of course hauntingly embedded with the stillness of time. Satyan is engaged in a consuming search for human dignity in even the poorest of poor he shoots. Even when he photographed celebrities his lens scouted their simplicity and their human essence. The questions that his many ordinary characters may throw at you about the paradoxes of life can never be captured in an intelligent caption-phrase. Those questions land softly on your mind, get caught in its gentle whirlpool and slowly make their way to you heart to stay there for a while. It is in this little journey and the resting lies the triumph of Satyan the photographer.

From where do these qualities that embellish every single picture of Satyan come from? You may get a range of clues in the answers below, but I would like to give a good share of the credit to Mysore. Satyan evolved in a remarkably progressive, most benevolent, fairly cosmopolitan and a liberal-human milieu of pre-Independence Mysore. He had great teachers and great friends who helped him answer his calling in life and nurtured his talent in its different bends. Mysore had a distinct worldview and Satyan carried it wherever he went. You can recover that worldview in parts in the novels of R K Narayan, in the cartoons of Laxman, in the music of Veena Doreswamy Iyengar, in the integrity of H Y Sharada Prasad, advisor to three Indian prime ministers, and of course in the pictures of Satyan. Like ordinary people became an abiding interest for Satyan's lens, the common man with a keen eye defined the work of both Laxman and Narayan. Significantly, all of them were from the same Mysore generation.

Satyan insists that he is a photojournalist and not a photographer. For decades Satyan's pictures were accompanied by text, captions, historical contexts and the emotional exigencies of the time. But now, in an exhibition hall they stand independent. Even with the absence of paraphernalia that has dropped off in time, what still remains is a tribute to the pure serene of the human spirit. His pictures shun the modern and evoke nostalgia, but to read nostalgia alone in his pictures would be limiting their purpose. They certainly cross the boundaries of nostalgia to allow a sacred communion with life.