

Foreword

This log is made for my satisfaction only. Have not made any comments with a purpose of hurting or insulting anyone, I apologize if anyone feels so.

Background

One of my best friends was getting married on 26th, Sunday in our native place, Palakkad, Kerala.. He is in Saudi Arabia, working for the Saudi Govt. (Read Typical Mallu). A must attend marriage, but bugger informed me Seven days before only. Since it was Deepavali season no tickets are available anywhere - no bus, no train, no travels. Ambo and ambo (me and wifie - Divyan and Simi) look at each other's face. Somehow get one ticket only for onward journey. Finally decided - Our palace on wheels aka Pulsar. She was cribbing ever since Dharward trip for not taking her along with me. And the stories about Sameer's Leh trip added fuel to the fire. Now God has given us an opportunity to do something similar to that. Only problem is that relatives (in laws, friends, Romans and countrymen) will train all their guns on us if they come to know in advance. Solution - don't tell them till we reach there. Once we are there, we can do the same treatment on them - Kahani Sameer ki. (Sameer couple made a tour of almost 2000+ km to Leh on a Pulsar 180. It took more than two weeks for them)

Two routes are there from Bangalore. One is via Mysore-Gudallur-Kalpatta- Tharamassery pass- Calicut(Kozhikkod) -Ottappalam-Palakkad. But that route is not familiar to me and half of the journey have to pass through Karnataka - Problem since I don't speak /read Kannada. Other route is Bangalore - Hosur -Dharmapuri - Salem - Coimbatore-Palakkad. This is the regular bus route. I read Tamil (Took just one day to learn - very few alphabets comparing to Hindi and Malayalam) though speaking part is difficult. But what the hell! Tamil and Malayalam are similar , so when I speak they can understand. A tried and tested method of course.

We don't like to ride at night. Not comfortable in highway riding at night. Especially with a pillion. Heard lot of stories about truck drivers sleep while driving at night - there will be a heavy stone on the accelerator. Logic is that small vehicles will give way!

Planned to start at 9.00 in the morning, reach there by 6:00. Date of trip 25th October 2003.

Packed up things on 24th, Took the bike to a nearest PB (did not have enough time to go to Venkat's place). Told him to do an emergency checkup- brake, lights, chain slackness and lubes in proper places. Rs. 100 for that. Have changed the oil two weeks back. Had the spare bulb and cables bought for Dharward trip .Do not have much luggage other than one day's dress for both of us, Medical Kit and ORS solution (electrolyte).

Trip Details : Bangalore-Palakkad-Bangalore.
Done by : Divyaprakash , Simi,
Ph 080- 37764316
Total distance : 945 kms
Bike : Bajaj Pulsar 150 KS. Model 2003
Registration Number : KA-03 EJ 838

Day 1. 25-Oct-2003.

9:30: Light breakfast. Set trip meter to 000. Not informing the house owner. (Don't want to hear "Ayyoooo!! this far in bike" etc. Just informed friends who reluctantly agreed but warned about the heavy risk involved.) Two things have to be done. Cancel the KSRTC ticket bought for that day. Another was to buy a helmet for wifie. The local KSRTC booking guy cannot cancel the ticket from there on the day of the journey. Heck!! So went to Kempe Gowda Bus stand and cancelled. That took precious 45 minutes. Came back to Lal bag road and bought a Volga helmet for Simi. Light gray. Fits properly. Changed the original visor to a dark one.

10:15. Took off from Lal Bag road. Comfortable traffic. Wifie feels like it was going to rain "Comfortably". But realized later it was because of her dark helmet visor. Reached Madiwala. Have to take Sarjapur road and so many left and right turns to reach Hosur road because of the Fly-over construction. (For Non -Bangalore people- Soon this city will be know as Fly-over city rather than Garden city. Many of them are coming up all over Bangalore) Hit a real dirt track about a kilometer. Crawling in 15-20 Kmph dinchack mode. Simi was enjoying it much - I was not. Finally reached Hosur road. After Wipro took speed . We already decided not to ride in more than 70 Kmph. So fought back the temptation to rip. Otherwise also in straight road 150 will not go beyond 100 with pillion. See some Splendors, YBZs and TVS victors. (We get curious stares as both of us were in Helmets/Jackets. Me in trademark yellow and Simi in Orange-red.). As the helmet rule will be implemented in Karnataka soon, we see unusual number of "shielded heads". Otherwise people love to ride fast showing their teeth at sun, without even a sunglass.

12:00. We crossed Hosur. It says welcome to Tamilnadu. Kamikaze TVS 50s, Victors, Fierros, Autos, cycles and pedestrians are coming from all directions. In Hosur TVS has a manufacturing Plant. And their advertisement says TVS-"namma ooru vandi" (our state's vehicles). So TVS penetration is more here. There also a fly-over construction is going on. Very slow speed riding. (Read 30-40 Kmph).

Stopped for lunch at Udupi Vegetarian Hotel. But oops! It is a Mallu hotel and no sign of Udupi there. Had mini meals - good. Fag - double good. Buy some banana for snacks. Asked one shop guy for where is the

nearest petrol station. We saw one some one Kilometer back. But did not want to go back. He said other than this there is nothing nearby. It worried me as I was planning to fill from Tamilnadu as petrol is bit cheaper here. So went back to the petrol station. There was no petrol in stock . The bunk boy said petrol comes only at 4:00. I asked where is the nearest bunk, he said there is another, one kilometer ahead. I thought about the shop guy. Mallu efficiency!!!.

From the next petrol bunk filled 10 liters of petrol. Price is not much cheaper than Bangalore. Anyway something is better than some other thing- they say. We push off around 12:30. Nice road, less incoming traffic. Cool nice weather.

13:30. Butt brake. Road construction work is going on. It is the part of four-lane Kashmir-Kanyakumari Express highway. One problem is that there will be some newly tarred nice stretches of say 1-2 KM, abruptly ends without any warning . Lot of dust. Fortunately it was not so hot . Just near Dharmapuri we got a small ghat session. Nice curves and sexy S-turns and monkey onlookers. We forget the 70 Kmph rule and give the accelerator to max. 105 Kmph. Wifie gets thrilled on that.

14:00 Reach Dharmapuri. Familiar criss-cross traffic. Here people are more curious. One or two "bikers" tried to race with us. But we did'nt take that bait. They followed us for 4-5 Kms and then retired (pride) hurt. From there Road was reasonably good. There is moderate trucks and bus traffic. Here I tread the "evasive maneuver" and "engine braking" learned during Dharward trip. And it works!! . Nervous at first. Then got the rhythm. We were doing it at a speed (80-90) I am comfortable with. Thanked Sash, Vibhu, Sharat and Sanjay for the tips.

15:00 Sutta break. Place unknown. Scenery is two Cosmonauts running around an isolated tree. One holding sutta. Other trying to snatch and throw it away. A very advanced romantic Indian movie scene!!!. Had some ORS liquid, one Banana each from the space-food stock. Dearly miss a camera.

16:20 Salem . Before reaching we had go to though the tough road construction site. Wanted to avoid the stretch. But a trustworthy auto driver properly led us there. It was like going through thick smoke. It took 45 minutes to come out of the dust bowl. Took some 20 minutes break. Trip meter reads 251 Kms. Immediately after the Salem circle we see a funeral procession. Crackers and drums - typical Tamil funeral scene if the deceased is a very old person. But in Hindu mythology to seeing a dead body is good omen. At least we took that in that way.

17:00 Sangagiri. We just passed through .

17:15 Kavery bridge: Water issue between three states. But we do not think about politics. It is a pathetic scene for us. No water at all. And to crown everything there is a dirtiest sewage channel passing parallel to it, full of toxic/Industrial waste. Long live Cauery. The Bridge itself was magnificent.

17:25 Trip meter clocked 300 km. Near AVIN (Milk unit). The place is called Chithod. Had Milk coffee.

19:10 A bus daba center/joint (dont know the name of the place). Evening twilight zone. Can't see with or without headlight. Did't want to ride during this time. So waited. Curious onlookers crowded (Karnataka registration bike , Mallu speaking munda-kudi in jackets-helmets and night time - well, nobody asked any questions.) Started off at 19:30. Have to mention good-bye waves from the crowd. This place was just after Perundurai. Before turning to Thirupur- the cotton city. After some 20 Kms noticed my tail lamp is not working . Stopped near a petrol bunk and inspected. Tail lamp bulb went kaput. And we forgot to take a spare tail lamp bulb. Didnot want to ride without tail lamp because for truck and missile bus drives we were completely invisible. Switched on the side indicator and continued. Fortunately a slow speed taxi was ahead. Religiously followed it till Avinashi. Enquired in a cycle shop. Luck of Mary! He had plenty ob similar bulbs in stock. Same bulb is used in truck decoration lamps.Thinking loud shopkeeper- not safe to ride with a girl at night).Changee the bulb, gave Mr. Well-wisher 20 bucks and a boy-scout salute.

19:40 Coimbatore bypass. This is constructed by L&T and there are their tollgates. No toll for bikes :).Well-marked and maintained roads. Just stuck to the yellow line for two wheelers. Could maintain 60 even at dark. Oncoming traffic is giving problem with high beams. But the toll system keeps most of the vehicles out of this route. Almost took 45 minutes to pass the last of the tollgate. In between a tanakka guy tried overtake-slowdown trick. Fortunately for us it was a TVS Victor and he does not have helmet, which made him vulnerable in the cool breeze and oncoming traffic. Outtook him in a traffic signal.

20:10. Walayar. Border of Kerala and Tamilnadu. Got 34 Kms to go. The Tamilnadu side is dry and without much vegetation except throne bushes . Crossed the small bridge bordering the two states rising both hands and shouting in Mallu (remember movie "Border" climax ? Indian Soldiers dancing on a wrecked PAK tank and background music Hindustan...Hindustan...Meri Jaan ...Hindustan..). The Walayar reserve forest begins. The emotional current through our hearts is beyond words. After that roads are very dark.Thanks to limited number of streetlights. But I am very familiar to this place - my place. Reached Palakkad town at 20:40. Stopped near a Fag shop and replenished reserves despite the disapproving look of good half.

21:00 Home. Shell-shocked in laws. Explanations, Roti, Kapda and Makan..Trip meter shows 456 km

Day 2 . 26 October 2003 - Friend's wedding. Our trip
story and disapproval from everyone less two- three
enthu friends. Some local trips.

Day 3 . 27 October 2003

8:00 Flag off . The trip meter reads 512 km. Backpack is bit heavy
because of Fried fish, Fish curry ,Mallu special red fat Greek - -
well, I mean Mallu - rice, tender coconuts and ORS solution..

So many words of caution from neighbors and in-laws. Till we cross the
town we heard so many times vehicles hard-braking. People are much more
curious here. And nobody wear jacket even in rainy season - considered
as an un-macho practice. And the hot and humid climate makes such
outfit an unnecessary one. In a traffic signal one Auto driver asked in
English "which registration KA?" Replied Karnataka. Before any more
question the signal light shows us green. Both of us are not talking
much as we are leaving native place. Once out of town picked up speed.
Since it rained pretty heavily during that time surrounding is lush
emerald green. Both Ambos rised helmet visor and took deep breath
before crossing border. Bye-bye Mallu land... till next time....

8:50 Crossed border. Need to fill petrol. 10 liters (Pulsar was
still in main. But we don't want to take chances). Hit the Coimbatore
bypass around 9:00. We see the beauty of the road now ,in daylight.
Just waiting for the cruiser bikes to plough the length and breadth of
it.Waiting to inhale the smell of burning tyre. We crossed the stretch
in 35 minutes. Rest was NH 47, surprise. Very less onoming traffic.

9:40 ORS break. It is somewhere after Avinashi. An accident . One
pedestrian was trying to pick up something and hit by an auto. Auto
fled the scene. His right arm is broken and the locals put a crude
tourniquet around it. At the same time two ambulance came - from two
different private hospitals. The guy who came two seconds ahead gets
the patient.

10:20. Another Sutta breaks. Somewhere after Perundurai. We do
not want to carry the weight of tender coconuts. So pulled down under a
tree and finished one each. This caused some # 1 troubles . Had
to stop at two three places to relieve ourselves. See a board there.
"Join to learn in grammatically correct spoken English".

11: 30 Cross Bhavani - Cauery bridge. Don t feel like stopping.
Before Salem take two three breaks. We start feeling fatigue of the
journey.

13:30 Salem. Passing the express highway construction. Trailing behind two trucks and a bus. A LTTE guy on a TVS Samurai makes gestures at Simi. She scratches my back but my concentration is on riding. After sometime again she scratches for attention. To avoid trouble I slow down the bike for him to pass. LTTE also does the same. We trail him for two minutes. He pulls out a mobile - obviously to call his comrades. I stopped the bike .At first think of violence. Then stopped two bikes coming behind and explained them. They said don't worry, we will take care, you carry on. When we overtake LTTE, he yells at us ---eeyaaaa---.We went ahead and turned back after some 100 meters. LTTE is stopped by our biker friends and held by his shirt collar. Our friends wave us to carry on and we do that. Great relief. After half an hour we stop for lunch. A brick manufacturing unit and a nice tree-shade. Another movie scene. Bikers having lunch, in the background vehicles dashing to both direction .Both are hungry enough to feel the taste of lunch as a five course one. We left the place at 14:00.

15:00 Dharmapuri stretch. Uphill. Feel good to overtake the struggling bus-truck traffic. Really feel the power of Pulsar. As read in the overdrive Pulsar seems to enjoy hills. After the stretch road divides into two. Reads Bangalore 126 km. Stopped near a Teashop and asked direction. This is Dharmapuri bi-pass road , 20 kms short. Also says road is good. We decided to give the road a try. A decision we regretted rest of the trip. Pathetic road . Cursed the Teashop guy throughout the journey. Had to take lot of breaks because of bone-jarring riding. Scenery is good on both the sides. We passed some ancient banyan trees and real heart of India (read villages). We even passed through some villages where no electricity available. The two small towns I remember are Palakkodu and Rayalkkottai. The 90 plus kms took three and half-hours of our time. Plus crushed bodies.

18:30. Twilight zone. Stopped near a small fag shop. Gave some smoke to soul and tea to stomach. Kannada speaking, friendly people. They guessed we are Mallus. One of them speaks two three Mallu words too. "Sukhamanoo" and "evide ponu" . Also talks about the famous song from the Mallu Movie (Kadalinnakkare Ponoree) Chemmeen, which won the national award in 1972. It is a surprise that for people from other states there is only this song exists in Malayalam movies. A Mallu stereotype song I guess. We started again at 18:40. Reached NH at 19:30. Passed Hosur. Hell-bend Bangalore going traffic. Very difficult to traffic.Miserable half an hour crawling at Madiwala. Took ring road . Reached home at 20:45

Trip meter shows 942 kms

21:30 Dinner and Crashhhh....