

# Driving through India to document its changes

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**Chennai:** When Justin Rowlett gets behind the wheel of his 1996 Ambassador and turns the key, the engine makes an unhappy whine. The battered white car is missing its petrol cap, a rear door handle and has rusted through in multiple places. "It is rather a banger and we had trouble with the brakes," says the BBC journalist. But it's got him and his team across 5,700km of eastern India, with numerous pit stops to shoot the documentary 'India on Four Wheels'.

Rowlett has been on the road for a month and wrapped up the shoot in Chennai on Tuesday. "We wanted to showcase the changes taking place in Indian society, the economic changes and the impact. We started from New Delhi and ended in Chennai as it is a manufacturing hub," he says.

His colleague Anita Rani, a British Indian, drove a Bolero through Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Mumbai and Bangalore. Rowlett chose a third-hand Ambassador without air-conditioning or power steering to take a trip through rural Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Orissa and



**ON THE MOVE:** BBC Journalist Justin Rowlett travelled across India to shoot the documentary 'India on Four Wheels'

Andhra Pradesh. "The vehicles we chose — one modern and one classic — sort of represent the contrast in Indian society," he says. The show will air in September.

During his travels, Rowlett spent time with a small farmer near Varanasi and Dongria tribals in Orissa. "India has seen 8% growth but many still live in poverty. There are about 400 million subsistence farmers who could be brought within the system to lift India and transform it into an economic su-

per power," says Rowlett, who recently did 'The Chinese Are Coming', a series on the growing influence of China in global business.

Rowlett is known as 'The Ethical Man' for his stories on reducing carbon emissions. He and his family spent a year living the frugal life trying to cut their carbon footprint. That tag is likely to have taken a bit of a beating on this trip as his car was far from fuel efficient. "I guess I used up all my accumulated carbon credits on this trip," he says.