

Showcasing India from an ambassador

May 25, 2011

CHENNAI: In a bid to capture the cultural and economic dichotomy of the Indian subcontinent, two Britishers recently embarked on a journey across the two distinct Indias: its culture hubs and its commercial capitals. The result of this month-long expedition has been a BBC documentary India on wheels and a rich repository of varied experiences in the country for the travellers.

Sharing some of those vignettes of India during his part of the project on Tuesday was popular BBC anchor Justin Rowlett, who captured the quintessential culture-dominant India across Agra, Varanasi, Lucknow and Kolkata. And what better way to take a peek at vintage India than through its rickety, old, Indian terrain-friendly Ambassador!

With no door handle on its right rear door, a makeshift cap to fill for a missing fuel tank lid and completely undusted, Rowlett's constant companion during his tour has been an ambassador from Kolkatta, manned by a driver Bobby, that fully fits the vintage tag. Travelling in this decade-old, second hand 1996-model Amby has been nothing short of exciting, he begins. "Its iconic design from the 1940s is still recognisable in new India and I thought it would be more fun to note the country's transformation through this vehicle," he says. Calling it a car of character, Justin called the Ambassador a living part of Indian history and said it should be cherished more.

The vintage vehicle, on its part, ensured him his quotient of 'fun' with its brakes failing during travel, and with a peacock falling on it in the highway Agra-Varanasi highway. "But it was fun all the way," said the Britisher who read up several books on India ahead of his travel to the country.

Speaking about his Indian experience, he says it was completely enriching. "The documentary required me to interact with varied Indians, from the secluded Dongria tribes to farmer families. India is a country where diversities are apparent even on one street. India is more a continent than a country," he says of his learning from the project. Justin also noted that India had the potential to become a super-power like China, but had not harnessed it entirely.

Justin's part of the project concluded on Tuesday in Chennai, regarded as India's automobile hub. "India on Wheels being a project that shows India through its distinct vehicles. So, we decided it made sense to conclude it in Chennai, regarded as the country's automobile hub," he said. Meanwhile, India Shining, shot across Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Bangaluru and Chennai, was traversed using a slick Mahindra Bolero, with host Anitha Rani, a Britisher of Indian descent.

The documentary, shot as a two-part series lasting an hour each, is expected to be telecast in September.

Article source: <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/showcasing-india-from-an-ambassador/154105-60-120.html>

<http://puri-travel.com/2011/05/showcasing-india-from-an-ambassador/>