

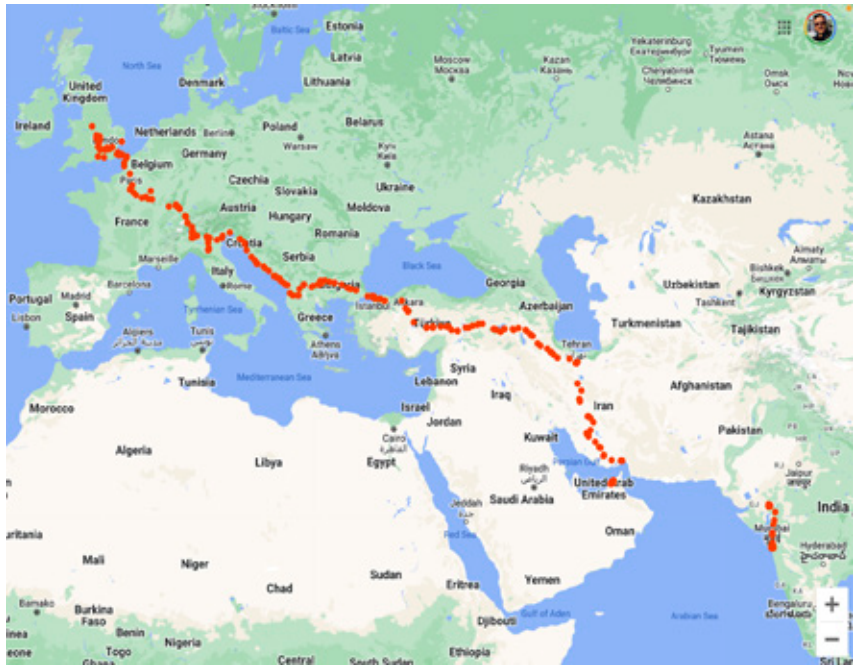
Lal Pari: The Incredible Journey

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Photos: Courtesy of Vinay Panjwani

When he was a young child, Daman Thakore’s mother told him bedtime stories about a red, fairy-like car that took his family on fantastic adventures around the world, saving them whenever they got in trouble. Half a century later, those stories inspired Daman to create an experience that would take three generations of his family 13,500 km from his home near Mumbai, India, through 14 countries in 73 days to Abingdon, UK, the home of MG ... in a 73 year old car.

The 1950 MG YT had been bought by Daman’s father Deval in the late 1970s and had spent its entire life in India. Its 4-cylinder, 1250 cc engine with 4 speed transmission produced little more than 50 hp and accomplished 0 to 60 in 27 seconds. It could handle two people in the car at a time, losing 10 hp for every extra person.

Daman and his family spent three years from 2016 to 2019 restoring the YT. He decided that they needed to get the MG “back to factory specifications” when they presented it at the 21 Guns Salute Concours d’Elegance in New Delhi in 2020 and won the Best of MG class. Subsequently they thought “if we have restored it to how it was when leaving the factory, then why not drive it back to the factory”.



The objective of driving the YT to Abingdon required a great deal of work, improvements and testing to ensure it could meet the challenges of crossing 14 countries.

The YT was given the name “Lal Pari” which means “red fairy or angel”. Their Tata Winger support van became “Lal Pari Ki Saheli” – “friend of the red fairy”. The team that Daman put together for the journey included his 21 year old daughter Devanshi, his wife Udita, his 75 year old father as well as his Uncle Madhu who did mechanical repairs on Lal Pari for the first 70 days, and then provided guidance over video calls during the last part of the trip.

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The Azadi Tower in Iran.



Lal Pari and the 2nd MG YT sourced from Canada.



Daman and Lal Pari at the 21 Guns Salute Concours.



Cappadocia in Turkey.

Lal Pari: The Incredible Journey Continued

There is a Canadian connection to the story. Daman decided he needed a parts car, so he sourced an MG YT in Toronto, where it had been a special order when originally bought from the dealership. While a total of 877 YTs were built, the parts car was only one of three YTs made with a TD dashboard. And it was completely original and unrestored. He had it shipped to India.

While the family had initially planned to begin the journey in 2019, COVID-19 caused a multi-year delay. The official start of the trip to Abingdon began in Mumbai in August 2023. The 14 countries Lal Pari was driven through included the UAE, Iran, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Slovenia, Croatia, Switzerland, Italy, France and the UK.



Ohrid, North Macedonia.



Lal Pari in Paris.

Describing the experience of surviving many setbacks, Daman indicated “The journey tested our patience and our problem solving skills to the hilt... Even when the axle broke in Croatia and I had to replace it myself with my Uncle directing me on the phone from India.”

The Lal Pari team met many challenges, such as fuel in Iran with too high carbon levels, two-thirds of the journey with only one rear brake working, and in Switzerland as well as London, discovering there was a seized valve with the YT driving on three cylinders. Nothing, however, kept them from their goal of reaching the home of MG, Abingdon-on-Thames, in November 2023. Having accomplished this incredible journey, the 1950 MG YT was packed in a container and shipped from the U.K. to India and driven the 550 kms home.

One of the extraordinary aspects of the journey was that the

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