

FEATURE

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SPREADING HAPPINESS AND JOY IN A CLASSIC MG TOURER



One of the most incredible 100-year MG celebrations

Tourer, one of the rarest models built by MG.

in the world last year was not held in the U.K. or the U.S., or Australia or Japan.

The credit goes to India. At least that's where a 73-day journey from India to the U.K. began in a 1950 MG Y-Type

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75-year-old father and 21-year-old daughter drove the MG. They were

“We covered over 13,500 kilometers and 14 countries... And it's probably the longest MG100 celebration drive in the world,” said Daman Thakore,

who with his

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followed by friends in a camper van equipped with parts and provisions.

The YT spent its entire life in India after being purchased by the elder Thakore. Only 877 YTs were built, making it a bit of a rarity in the history of MG, according to historian Graham Robson.

Moreover, the MG YT was built for export only. No new YT was ever delivered to a buyer in Britain, according to historians. This model is a four-seater but had only two doors hinged at

the rear.

The car is powered by the same engine as the MG TC, a four-cylinder, 1250cc engine producing a little more than 50 horsepower and employing a four-speed transmission.

As new, it was capable of a 76 mph top speed and went from 0-60 in 27 seconds.

“The initial seed of the trip was planted probably 45 years ago when my mom used to tell me bed time stories about a fairy-like red car which would take us on all the different adventures around the world, in jungles

and mountains,” Daman Thakore explained.

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“That is how the car got its name Lal Pari, which means Red Fairy... Lal Pari spreads happiness and joy wherever it goes.”

About seven years ago, the Thakore family decided to restore the car, with a “back to the factory theme,” he said.

“I took reference pictures of the YT when it was being built in the factory, as well as old brochures and books before proceeding with the restoration.”

Daman Thakore had hoped to make the epic journey in the resurrected MG YT in 2019, but COVID dashed those plans. “In 2023, I turned 50 and felt, if not now when?”

The journey began on India's 77th Independence Day and the intrepid group of travelers crossed 16 countries, including Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Switzerland, Germany and France before reaching their final destination and their car's birthplace -- Abingdon on Thames, England, which is the legendary home of The MG Car Company Ltd.

The group left from Ahmedabad, India on Aug. 12. Ahmedabad is located near the banks of the Sabarmati River, about 16 miles from the capital of Gujarat, Gandhinagar, also known as its twin city.

Three days later, they took a sea route from Mumbai to Dubai, which they reached on Aug. 28. Once in Dubai, they began driving and driving and driving until they reached the U.K.

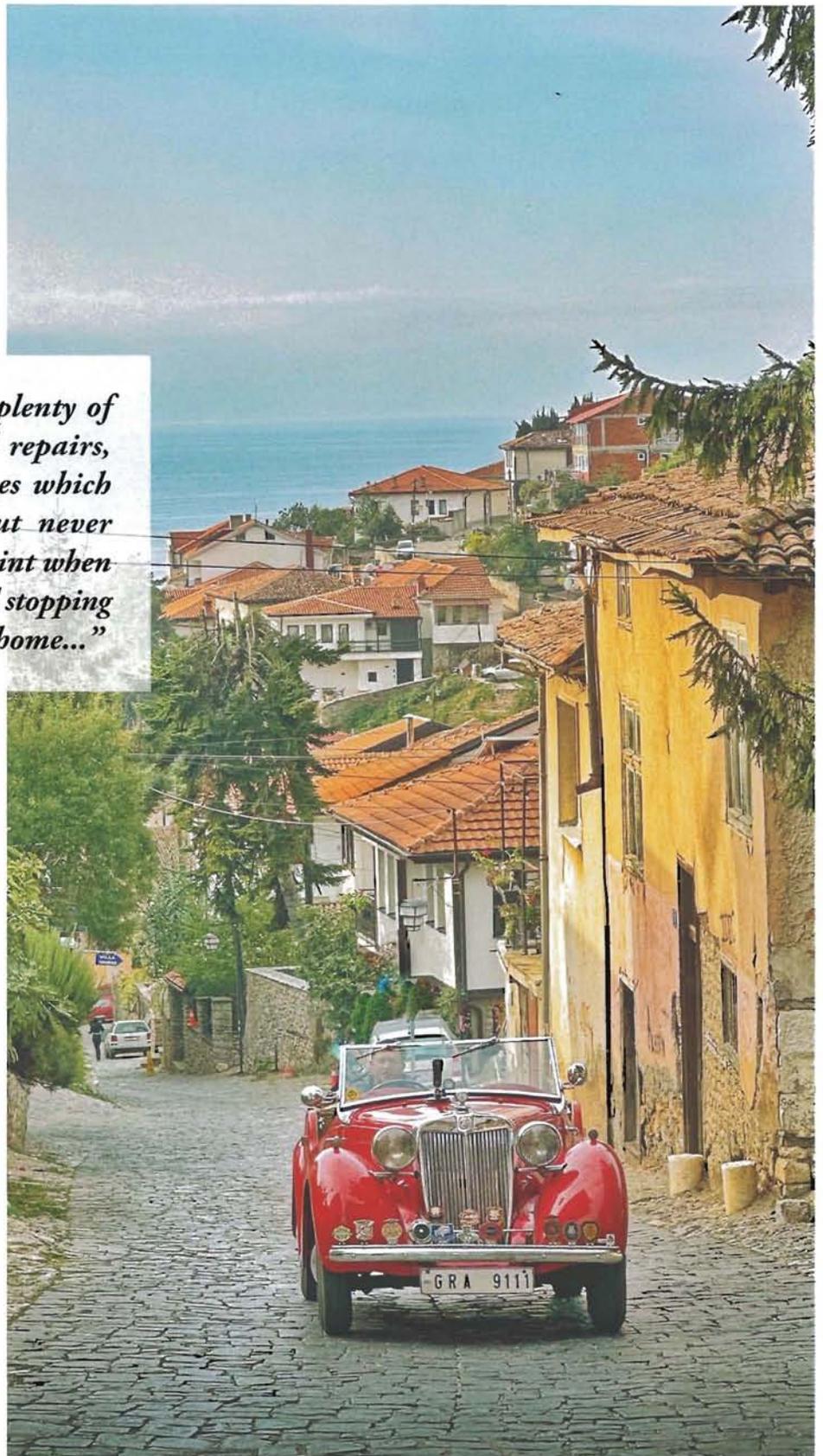
Not surprisingly, the group experienced more than its share of bad weather during the expedition. The early days consisted of light clothing, especially T-shirts.

"But as we drove through Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Slovenia and Croatia, it began getting cold. When we reached Switzerland, France, Italy and the UK, it was raining," Thakore said.

"There were plenty of setbacks and repairs, and challenges which we faced, but never was it to a point when we considered stopping or returning home," he said.

"The journey tested our patience and problem-solving skills to the hilt... Even when the axle broke in Croatia and I had to replace it myself, with help of my uncle directing me on the phone in India."

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Daman Thakore recalls some of the journey by the problems they experienced in the country they were in at the time.

For example, the fuel in Iran, which cost 10 cents a liter contained a lot of carbon deposit. "Almost every day by afternoon, the plugs would need to be cleaned or the car would act funny. We replaced two sets of plugs and a carburetor in 2,000 kilometers while we were there."

Halfway through Turkey, the brakes started to get mushy. It turned out the rear axle was leaking oil and fouling the brakes. "We tried to rectify the problem by changing the seal." They weren't able to make a permanent fix until they reached Switzerland.

"Almost two-thirds of the journey we were with only one rear brake working."

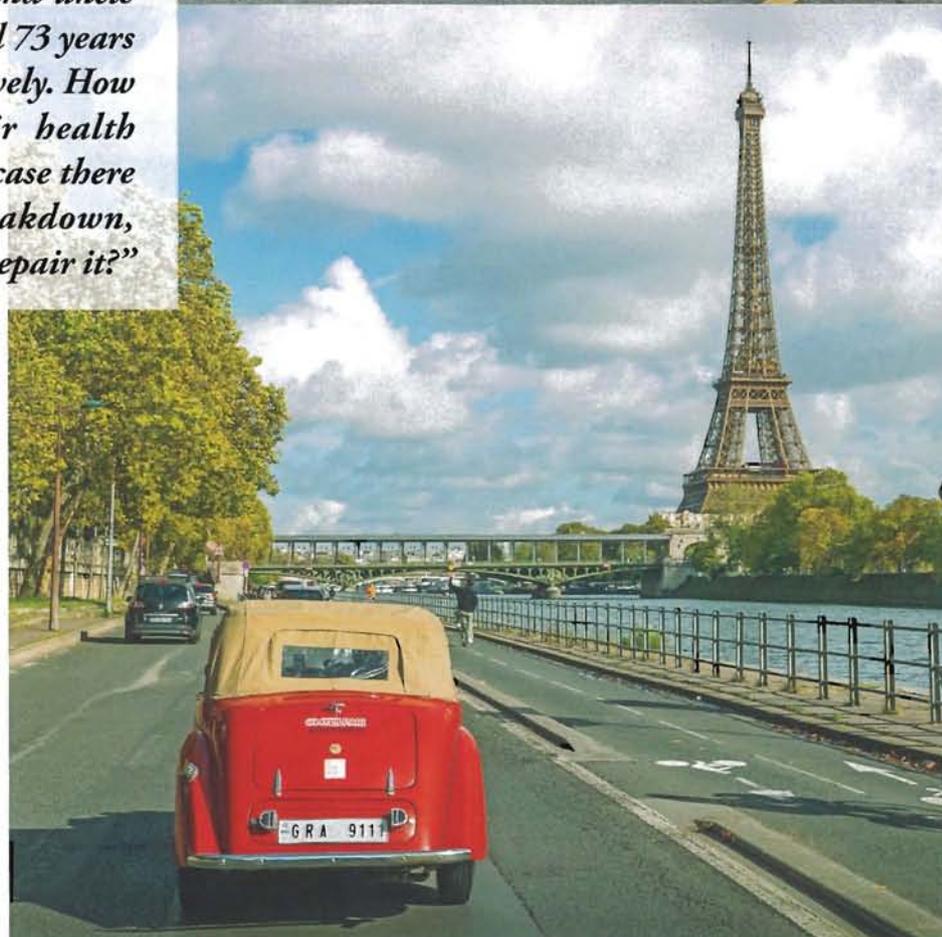
Sure, he said, "There were times when we thought we would not make it, but it never occurred to us to stop and return. In fact, we didn't want the trip to end."

"Never in our wildest dreams did we ever imagine that we would be driving our India-registered British-manufactured MG through the streets of Iran or Paris or Buckingham Palace. It was a surreal experience."

Aside from the beautiful landscape and excitement of driving outside of the country, it was connecting with local people of so many nationalities and spreading smiles and joy wherever Lal Pari went."

One of the most challenging parts of the journey was the last day, from London to Derby, "with a seized valve and Lal Pari driving on three cylinders."

"Apart from the 73-year-old Lal Pari, my father and uncle were 75 and 73 years old respectively. How would their health endure? In case there was a breakdown, how do we repair it?"



“It took seven hours driving at 20 miles per hour on a 70 mph highway, with pouring rain, minus-10 degree temperatures... and thundering trucks threatening to run over us.”

But, Daman Thakore said the very most frightening part of the journey was the decision to make the journey.

“There were so many unknowns. We had never driven Lal Pari more than 1,000 kilometers at a time.” And no Indian had ever attempted to drive a classic MG back to its birthplace.

“Apart from the 73-year-old Lal Pari, my father

“Apart from the 73-year-old Lal Pari, my father and uncle were 75 and 73 years old respectively. How would their health endure?”



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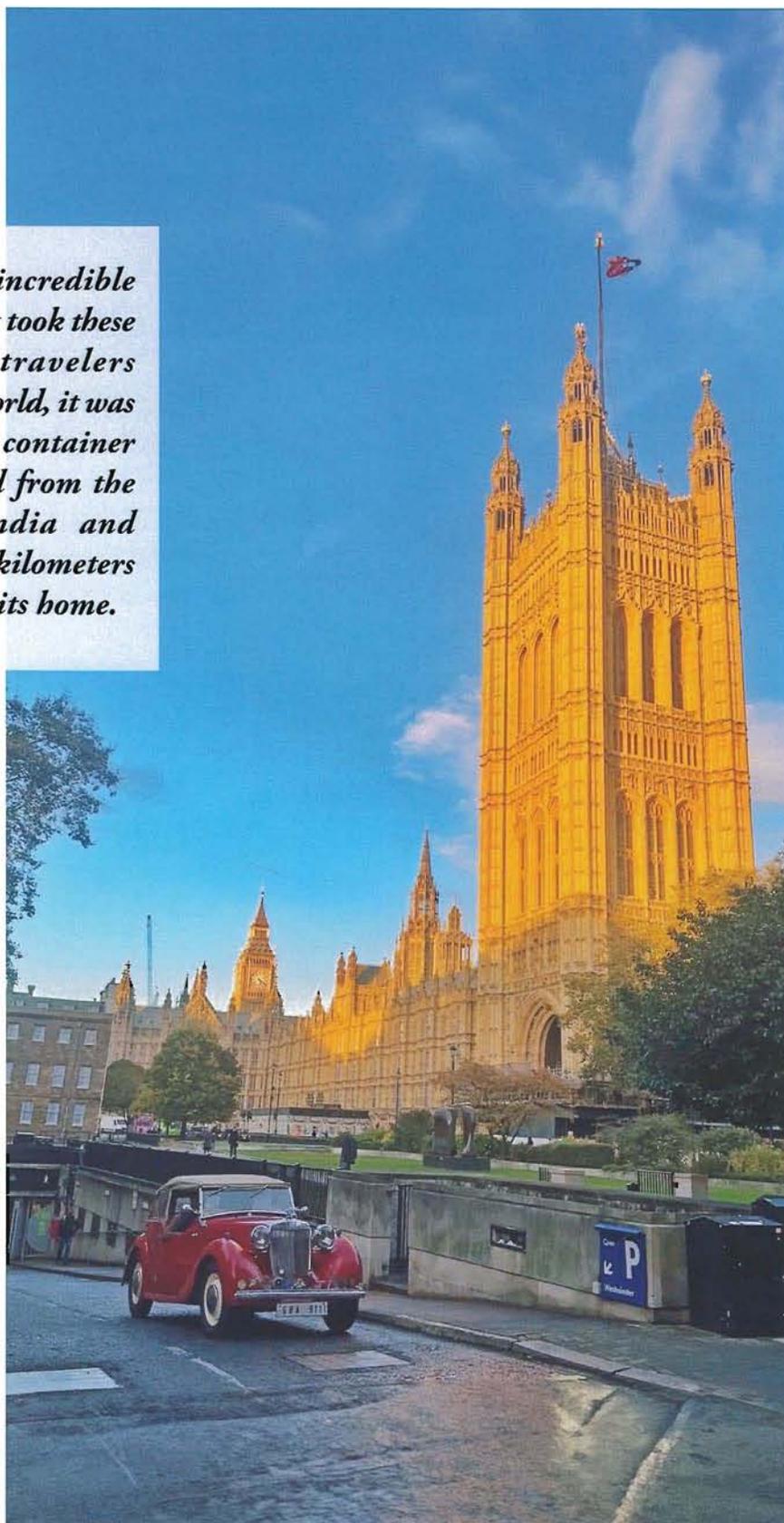
And finally, could family members ranging in age from 21 to 75 "enjoy and survive each others' company for three months?"

Fortunately, Thakore said, "We did not have any major hiccups." A sterling silver hood monogram of the Sardar Patel Statue of Unity was specially commissioned to adorn the hood of Lal Pari and was gifted to the people of the U.K. from the people of India at the conclusion of the journey.

The Statue of Unity is the world's tallest statue, with a height of 597 feet and depicts Indian statesman and independence activist Vallabhbhai Jhaverbhai Patel. He was the first deputy prime minister and home minister of independent India and a follower of Mahatma Gandhi.

As for the incredible MG YT that took these intrepid travelers across the world, it was placed in a container and shipped from the U.K. to India and driven 550 kilometers non-stop to its home. ○

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