

## Brit romances Ambassador on India trip

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Justin Rowlatt with his 1996-model Ambassador in which he journeyed from Delhi to Chennai — DC

Trust an Englishman to rekindle the romance of India's own Ambassador over the present clutch of SUVs and luxury sedans while discovering India through a road journey.

Justin Rowlatt, a BBC anchor, did just that, driving a 1996 model Ambassador through a 24-day journey from Delhi that ended at Chennai on Tuesday.

In spite of a bone rattling trip over 5,500 km, Rowlatt, 44, has turned a true fan of the stodgy Amby, saying it is indeed the car designed for India. "It is a solid and safe car for India's chaotic roads, even though its brakes may not be that reliable," he pointed out after completing the final lap on the Marina Beach.

Asked why he chose the Ambassador for his documentary 'Indian on Wheels', Rowlatt explained that the Ambassador, manufactured since 1948, actually symbolised the story of India, having been the

unchallenged king of Indian roads for over five decades.

"I wanted to use the car itself as a metaphor while discovering the new India, whose car population has simply exploded."

Rowlatt's journey, which started from Delhi's India Gate, took him through Agra, Varanasi, Lucknow, Kolkata, Sunderbans and the tribal belts of Orissa before culminating in Chennai.

"My trip to one of the oldest tribal hamlets in the forests of Orissa was truly memorable and I must admit that the Ambassador behaved pretty well through some really bad roads. The car is indeed built for India," Rowlatt said.

The 1996 model car with no AC or power steering was purchased by Rowlatt from "one Mr Singh in Delhi" for a fancy price of Rs 1.25 lakh. Mr Singh had claimed that it had been the official car of a Union minister for 10 years.

"I know I overpaid but the time I had spent in this car makes it worthwhile," said Rowlatt, who has decided to sell his Amby to an Indian friend for Rs 10,000.