

Reflections

by BOB RUPANI



What keeps India from staging well-organised, world class motoring events?

WHAT I SAID LAST MONTH ABOUT classic car events in India and how they need to be improved and taken to a national championship level, has evoked a lot of response. Some agreed wholeheartedly.

Others were sceptical and said that things will never change. They believe that the organisers will always treat the events as their personal property and never relinquish their hold on them. Of course, there are also those that say (you don't need to be Einstein to know who these people are), "I am nobody to comment on how the vintage car movement or events are run in our country." Some say, I have joined a rival camp. Others ask me what I intend to gain by saying what I did.

Let me say once and for all, I have no axes to grind and bear no grudges whatsoever against any individual or organisation. I am simply someone who loves cars, and would love to see the standard of motoring events improve in India.

We as a nation and people, organise the Kumbh Mela, the world's biggest peaceful religious gathering. In 2013, over 120 million people gathered in Allahabad for the Kumbh and not a single serious incident took place. The population of England is about 54 million, so imagine over twice that number of people coming to a small city like Allahabad and staying on the banks of the Ganga. Simply amazing.

Every year Mumbai hosts the Ganesh festival, which culminates with the *visarjan*. Millions of people take to the streets dancing, singing and then proceed to immerse the idols. The organisation of this religious festival is near perfect. In fact I don't think any other country could organise such mammoth festivals.

But how do we achieve this? For one most Indians are god fearing people and deeply religious. What's also very important is that nobody can lay claim to the ownership of the Kumbh Mela. It belongs to every Hindu, every Indian and for that matter every citizen of our planet. The same is true of the Ganesh festival.

As I said last month, most organisers of classic car events in India are reluctant to function in a structured manner with other clubs and bodies to raise the level as a whole. And when someone like me suggests it, he immediately becomes 'Enemy Number 1'.

In some cases organisers cannot even agree on a date for their event. Why can't organiser 'A' for example announce that our vintage and classic car event will be held on the first weekend of February every year. This way it will not clash with other events and



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enthusiasts and participants will have a timetable and calendar to work with.

Most organisers are businessmen or professionals, who have to take time out from their busy schedules to organise the event. They could of course employ professionals on a full time basis to run their events, but this again would mean delegation and control slipping out of their hands. But if one organiser goes down this route, he can then put together a team of professionals who could market the event and raise funds through sponsorships and other such tie-ups. Another could work on using social and electronic media to get the event more exposure. Someone else can devote himself to designing the event route and plan and make it as innovative, challenging and fun as possible. The possibilities are endless.

If participants of classic car events get enthusiastic spectators, good organisation, a good driving route, lots of media coverage and big prize money, they will have more incentive to pursue and invest in their passion. Even the quality of participating cars will improve. I hope all this happens. Our country needs and should have a top class 'Indian National Vintage and Classic Car Championship'. ❌

Bob Rupani is a pioneering Indian automobile journalist and has edited magazines like *Car & Bike International*, *Auto Motor and Sport (India)*, *BBC Top Gear (India)* and *Auto India*

@evoindiamag

(India) and Auto India