

# INTERNAL COMBUSTION

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**THE PLEASURES OF DRIVING WITH EXTRA DRIVING LIGHTS, IS SOMETHING THAT MOST MODERN CARS DO NOT OFFER YOU. WHAT A SHAME!**

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**H**eadlights have undergone a big transformation in recent years. There was a time when cars came with headlights in only two shapes – round or rectangular. Unlike today where every car has individually shaped and styled headlights, back then, most were interchangeable and manufacturers just selected a shape and size they wanted and these were then supplied by the vendors. Only in very rare cases was something custom-built or tailor-made for a car. And because at times the lighting was not good enough for the performance of a car, it came with

extra driving lights built by specialist manufacturers like Hella, Bosch, Cibie, Lucas, etc.

Now there has been a huge advance in lighting technology. Even if the design of the vehicle requires them to be slim or small, the illumination they provide is more than adequate for most driving conditions. Fog lights are also an integral part of most (if not all) automotive designs, so few manufacturers offer the option of extra driving lights. To me, this is a tragedy of modern day cars and a huge loss to present day drivers. Of course most owners will never even know this, because they have never experienced the pleasure of driving a car with extra driving lights.

As far as I am concerned, if you have not driven a car with purpose-built, high-quality extra driving lights, you have missed out on a great motoring experience. Right from the 80s till well into the 2000s, I always had my very own collection of extra driving lights and various brackets to help mount them on any car I may be taking on a long journey. My collection consisted of a pair of Hella 2000 spreads and a pair of 2000 spots or pencil beams. But they were so large in size, that mounting all four together is something I never quite managed, so I always used either/or. In fact as I did so much long distance driving then, I had worked out my exact lighting preferences. For some reason, maybe because of the high quality and easier availability, my preferred manufacturer was Hella. And my collection also included Hella Comet 500 Driving Lamps, one white and a yellow pair. I had a set of KC Daylighters too.

My most favoured combination was two Hella Comet 500 Driving lights (white in the dry and yellow in the wet) flanked by the two big Hella 2000 spreads. I had a custom-made bracketing system that made this combination convenient to mount on cars like a Premier Padmini (later 118 NE); Maruti Gypsy; Esteem; Zen and 800; Peugeot 309, etc. As the brackets were designed by me keeping in mind the focussing of the lights, it was an easy exercise, and something I enjoyed immensely. It gave you so much connect with the car and almost made you feel like you were working together, to create a greater driving experience.

So what is so magical about driving with extra lights? To really appreciate this joy fully, you should be doing a lot of night driving, including some all night long runs. Start by pointing them in the manner you want. I would begin with the Comet 500s and get their elongated oval-shaped beams to overlap slightly in the centre. Depending on the top speed of the car, I would then raise these beams, increasing the height (and thus range) if my cruising speeds would be higher. Then the Hella 2000s, with their almost 180-degree spread were focussed and fastened. I always preferred the one on the left-hand side to be lower and more left inclined as it allowed me to better see the space available on left, in case an oncoming vehicle decided to push me off on a narrow road.

Typically, the lights would get fitted a day before and on the first evening of the road trip itself, I would try and find a quiet road to park and set all these four lights as per my preferences. And then the fun began. I would typically be driving in rural and forested areas, far away from cities or crowded highways. Often between midnight and morning, one hardly encountered another vehicle or even human being. All that was there between you and the darkness of the night were your illuminators. One drove with all lights on, with the headlights playing a marginal supporting role, and more used for flashing than anything else. Soon the lights and road cast a spell on you. Your eyes keenly scouted the terrain ahead. The bright and well focussed lights helped them pick out even the smallest of details. The long beam of the Comets projected way ahead of the car and moved up and down and left and right, in a manner that gave the impression that they were a physical extension of the car itself. At some point, without ever knowing when, I would become one with the vehicle and the terrain we were racing through. The mind would shift into what I like to describe as 'Headlight and Highway Hypnosis' mode. All the senses were in an enhanced state of alert and you would have settled into a driving rhythm, which gave you maximum pleasure and minimum fatigue. How I miss those days! Just have to fit extra driving lights on one of these newer vehicles and go for another all night long drive. 