

**clans**

Jennifer Wyatt  
Canadian golfer

I am relying on the theory that playing golf is just like riding a bike and that I haven't forgotten how



**KICKSTART:** Lambrettas and Vijai Supers are favourites. BCSC founder-member Arun (on blue scooter) shows off his beauty

# An SOS for engines on their last WHEELS

What's the mood among members of the Bangalore Classic Scooters' Club after its grand fifth rally that saw 23 vintage scooters ride together last Sunday? SOS (Save our scooters)! Shilpa CB reports



**HUES HUE:** Geared scooters manufactured before 1985 were welcome at the rally

**O**n the last Sunday of January this year, an unusual spectacle rolled on Bangalore's roads. Twenty-three pairs of wheels went on a rally and what they carried were no ordinary automobiles. They were classic beauties from the pre-1985 era. And don't think of these oldies as creaky, cranky, haggard machines. They're in their prime and in top shape, thanks to their 'scooter-crazy' owners who've revived and preserved them. The scooters belong to members of the Bangalore Classic Scooters' Club which was holding its fifth rally.

Unlike the classic items, the story of the Bangalore Classic Scooters' Club is fairly new. Simply told, it all started when two classic scooter lovers — Siddharth Naidu and Arun P — found each other. "Siddharth wanted to restore his 1970 Lambretta scooter. I had posted an ad on the Internet for an old scooter I wanted to sell and had also mentioned that I restore old scooters. He got in touch," Arun recalls. Arun, an out-of-work design engineer, supervised the restoration by a local mechanic. Once Naidu's Lambretta was fit enough to hit the road again, the two planned a ride around Cubbon Park. Two others joined them. "Over grape juice and chai, we decided to start the Bangalore Classic Scooters' Club," says Naidu of that "fateful day" in April 2009.

BCSC (short for Bangalore Classic Scooters' Club) was inspired by another vintage vehicle collector's community — Fiat 1100 Club, Bangalore. "Young guys like us, they started their club in much the same way as we did with four members in Cubbon Park, only it was set up a month earlier than when BCSC started. We began attending their meets, and now, we share many members. Looks like a lot of Fiat lovers also love

the other Italian-styled beauties like Lambretta and Vespa," Naidu says. Club membership has grown rapidly and it's all been through word-of-mouth or through the regular outings that club founders organised for their collection. "We would go on rides for pleasure and that served to popularise the club as well. Collectors would spot us and get in touch," Arun says. The idea was to "bring in as many people as possible". The scooters had other collectors knocking on the club's doors.

Inspired by a vintage vehicles collector community, they not only collect Vijai Supers, Vespas, Lambrettas, Lambis, its 30-odd members aged between 21 and 60 years also collect unusual items. Watches, coins, stamps, old photos, etc. "We have a thing for all kinds of old stuff," Siddharth Naidu says

Who is welcome to join? "You should own a geared scooter, preferably those manufactured before 1985. The new generation, gearless scooters are not allowed, even if it's the very first Kinetic Honda to enter India!" says Naidu. The criteria weren't hard to meet at all. While the first rally had four scooters, the latest "was beyond our wildest dreams! 23 scooters attended!!!" as Naidu puts it. But this is just a fraction of the actual number of scooters that the club's 30 members own.

So, what makes the club tick? "SOS (Save Our Scooters) is the sentiment/spirit of the club. A lot of us learnt to ride on our dad's old scooter, and that's why a lot of us developed a connection with old scooters. Old scooters bring back memories to many..."

Arun fell in love with scooters in his teens. "My father used to ride a model called Falcon. I learned to ride on it. Even today, I cannot ride a modern vehicle," says the 23-year-old "psyched up guy, a scooter maniac" who "goes back in time". He adds another tidbit. "My mom is a Rajkumar fan, I grew up watching his movies where he would ride Lambrettas, mopeds and bikes." The youngster who owns a whole fleet of scooters including a Vespa, a Vijai Super, Jawa doesn't want the astounding number publicised lest it attract attention he cannot handle.

One of the founder members of the club, Gokul M 'hides' something round and curvy in his bedroom. It is one of the four numbers he cherishes, much to the disgruntlement of his family. Two he keeps in the garage and the other is resting under the staircase. The collector who works in public relations is planning a grand surprise entry for BCSC's next rally. "Don't write anything about it!" he says wanting to keep it under wraps till he makes his entry on it at the club's next event.

Gokul met Naidu on the website Team bhp, an online community for those interested in anything with wheels and an engine. The two hit it off instantly and soon discovered that they owned a blue and white series 2 Lambretta. Now, he's looking out for a series one Lambretta. But it's hard to find; Gokul knows a lot about why that is so. "These scooters fetch a high price if scrapped because they are made of alloys of aluminium. That's how most have van-

ished," he says. There is also a more disconcerting trend that has made these scooters scarce. "An Indian company bought the dye from an Italian company called Innocenti that manufactured these scooters and began making them here in India. They were being exported and even today, there is a demand for them in the UK where it is a fashion statement to ride a vintage scooter. Even a few celebrities there own them," he says. It is illegal to export anything in vintage and antique value but that rule applies only to cars. The absence of proper laws has made these scooters vulnerable, many of which dealers pick up from scrap yards.

This trade has made owners wary of selling their scooters which they've held on to for years for sentimental reasons. Yatish GV had to visit the 'old man' he bought his 1984 model of the Indian Lambi from, everyday for months to persuade him to sell. "They are reluctant. They know of people who buy it for scrapping and then export it. They need to be assured of good care for their prized possessions. They're deeply attached to the vehicles, have many memories associated with them. These scooter owners are like that," says Yatish recalling the stories the 'old man' told him over a cup of chai he served before handing over the scooter. Luckily for Yatish, the scooter was in "mint condition, with original tyres and parts"; it hadn't been ridden around much. "It's surprising how good these vehicles are. It does cost a lot to do them up," he says. But it's all worth the effort for these enthusiasts who want to "save the humble scooter from extinction."

## On mission to rescue the old

**B**CSC is possibly the only active scooter club in India. There are clubs for VW Beetles, Fiats, Jaws, Bullets, none for the humble scooter. Our club is like the first of its kind, and fills a void for the classic automobile lovers who love scooters, says founder-member Siddharth Naidu. Along with Vijai Supers Vespas, Lambrettas and Lambis, its 30-odd members who are between 21 and 60 years of age, also collect all kinds of unusual items. Watches, coins, stamps, old photos and letters. "They have a thing for all kinds of old stuff," Naidu says.



**ATOP GEAR:** BCSC founder-member Gokul M on his series two Lambretta

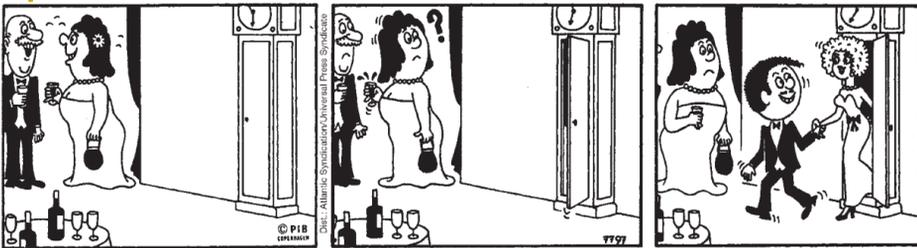


**SCOOTING AROUND:** Entries of the Bangalore Classic Scooters' Club lined up in Cubbon Park this January. Extreme right: BCSC founder-member Siddharth Naidu

**Belong to a clan?** : The Mag on Sunday features communities of people who have taken the road less travelled in pursuit of their passions — be it biking or bird-watching, angling or entrepreneurship. If you think you belong to an interesting group and want to connect and build relationships with more people who share your interest, write in to [dnaindiaclan@gmail.com](mailto:dnaindiaclan@gmail.com)

## FEET UP

**PEPE**



**CROCK**

