

Design Resource

Timeline of Indian Automobile

Iconic cars

by

Dnyaneshwar Pawar and Prof. Malhotra Sugandh
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile>



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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/introduction>

Introduction

The meaning of automobile can be an auto car, motor car, or car. It all began with steam engine automobiles, little later cars powered by an Internal combustion engine running on fuel. Now electric and smart automobile came into existence. This document explains various automobile model and their timeline in India to understand the evolution in the Indian automobile industry.



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Four Wheelers

The year 1898 saw the first car rolling out on the streets of Mumbai. Then, for nearly 30 years after that, no attempt was made to manufacture or assemble a vehicle in India. Then, the automotive industry started with the import of cars for royal families, which perhaps started in the 1920s-30s. Since then Indian auto industry has witnessed a lot of change. A land of premier Padmini, ambassadors, scooters, tempos, trucks, and autos, India had not seen much of choice in Vehicles. For many years India did not have a manufacturing capacity of its own. Now, India is one of the biggest automobile markets in the world, as it became the 2nd largest producer of 2 wheelers, the largest tractor manufacturer, the 4th largest commercial vehicle manufacturer in the world, and the 4th largest car market in Asia.



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Ambassador



Mahindra CJ3A 1949



Hindustan Ambassador
1954



Premier Padmini 1964



Standard Herald 1965



Force Metador 1969



Rajah Kazwa 1976



Sipani Dolphin 1982



Maruti 800 1983



Hindustan Contessa 1984

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Maruti Omni 1984



Premier 118NE 1985



TATA Sierra 1991



Force Trax 1998



TATA Indica 1998



Maruti Gypsy 1985



Maruti 1000 1990



TATA Sumo 1994



TATA Safari 1998



SAN Strom 1998

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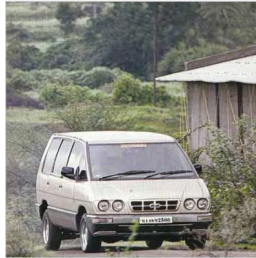
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Rajah Kazwa 1998



TATA Indigo 2002



Mahindra Scorpio 2002



Chinkara Roadster 2003



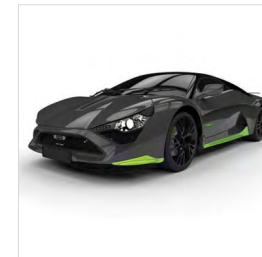
ICML Motors Extreme
2006



TATA Nano 2008



Hradyesh Morris Street
2011



DC Design Avanti 2012



Mahindra Electric e20
2013



Mahindra XUV500 2014

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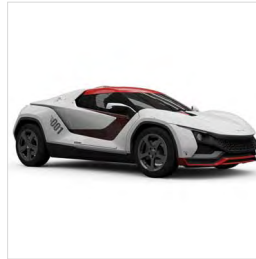
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TAMO RaceMO 2017



VAZIRANI Shul 2018



TATA Harrier 2019

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Ambassador

The revolution in the automobile industry started with the introduction of a people's car from Maruti Udyog, a state-owned company. The result was Maruti 800. It became popular because of its low price, high fuel efficiency, reliability, and modern features compared to its competition at the time. Tata motors exposed buses and trucks. The liberalization of 1991 opened up India for the global automotive giants like General Motors, Ford, Toyota, Honda, Hyundai, and others to set up manufacturing plants. The economic growth resulted in high-end automobile manufacturers coming to India like Rolls Royce, Bentley, and Maybach.



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Mahindra CJ3A 1949

In 1947, the parts for 75 jeeps name to India; assembly began in Mazgaon, Bombay. The idea was to build rugged, simple vehicles capable of tackling Indian roads.

Mahindra began producing Willy's Cj3a Jeep in 1949. Cj3a was a 4-wheel drive off-roader that was introduced to the Indian audience.



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Hindustan Ambassador 1954

The iconic Ambassador symbol of India's automotive history. The story of Ambassador begins with the land master, which is basically the Morris Oxford ii.

This car was made for people who preferred to enjoy the journey while sitting in the back seat. With major changes in terms of its body with a new front end, new grille, new bonnet, and most importantly, a new tail section with tail fins ambassador is born.

The Ambassador was a spacious and multipurpose car. Mostly own as politician's preferred car, a symbol of status, most popular taxi, etc.



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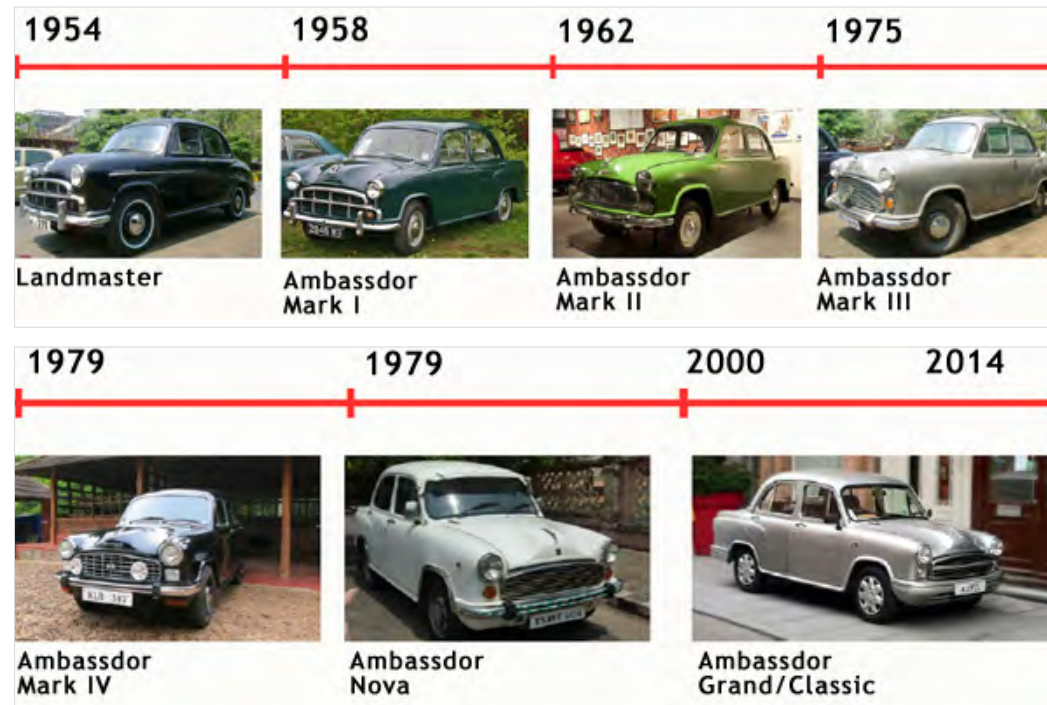
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Premier Padmini 1964

Premier Padmini started as the Fiat 1100 delight in 1964 on Indian roads.

Aesthetically the car was simple and sleek. It had a 3-box design with chrome-lined round headlights placed at corners with a giant grill at the center housing pal logo and blinkers placed beneath it. It had curved front and rear bumpers crafted in chrome door handles and a hub wheel cap also made up of chrome.

Padmini was manufactured with bench-style seating, with hand gears earlier before it upgraded itself to the floor gear, bucket seat models.



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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/four-wheelers/standard-herald-1965>

Standard Herald 1965

It was the most advanced family car of its time. The extravagance tastefulness which went to our shores during the 1060s was a class separated from its adversaries. This luxury 4-door saloon was the Indian version of Triumph Herald.

Watching the success of Herald globally, Indian Automobile Manufacture Standard decided to bring the car to India.

The car was available in different exquisite colors: Sebring White, Powder Blue, Phantom Gery, Black, and Conifer Green.



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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/four-wheelers/force-metador-1969>

Force Metador 1969

On 14th December 1983, Maruti 800 was unveiled in India.

Metador vans were once a common sight on the Indian roads. Purposefully built, the metadors served as the vehicle for the people traveling in groups. With the evolution of the market, metadors disappeared from the public roads.

Elegant, versatile, economical.



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Source:

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Rajah Kazwa 1976

Situated in Bangalore, Sipani had its starting points in Sunrise Automotive Industries Ltd (SAIL), which was set up in 1974 with assistance from British Producer Reliant.

The principal result of Sunrise Automotive was an inquisitive-looking three-wheeler called the Badal.



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Sipani Dolphin 1982

The Indian car industry started to thrive in the last part of the 1900s. Numerous organizations acquainted their vehicles with Indian clients. Some made a very decent imprint though some made a very decent history. One such organization is Sipani, which additionally attempted to make a spot on the lookout. One of the most successful cars from Sipani is the Dolphin.

Sipani's Badal failed to gain traction in the market, so the company had to bring something that would look more like a car. This was when the Sipani Dolphin was launched. It is the Indian version of the Reliant Kitten, the British four-wheeled hatchback.



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Maruti 800 1983

On 14th December 1983, the birth of the iconic Maruti 800 has remained one of the most successful cars India has ever seen.

Maruti 800, with its tiny engine and front-wheel-drive format, was economical, affordable, and (relatively) spacious.

Maruti 800 was launched at a price of Rs. 48,000 A moderately hefty sum back in the day.



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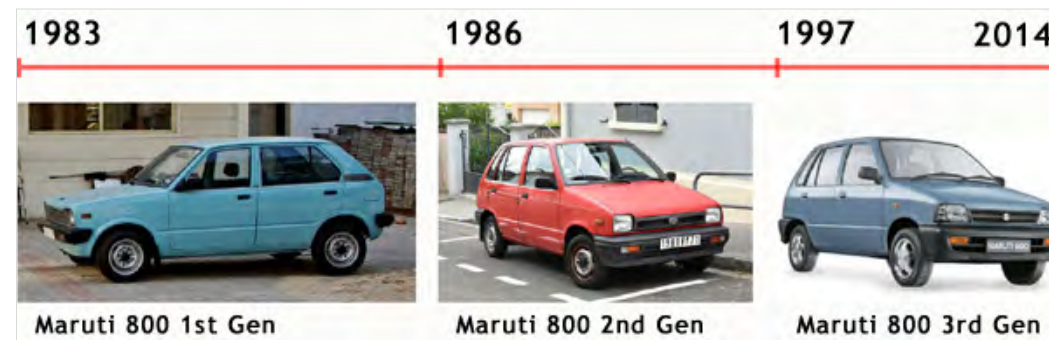
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Hindustan Contessa 1984

In 1984, the Hindustan Contessa was introduced in our country. This, however, was not an affordable option for the brand but rather a premium one. It was based on Vauxhall Victor FE/VX, which was already discontinued in 1978 in Europe.

The Hindustan Contessa is one of the most iconic cars to be manufactured in India. India's very own muscle car.

The original contessa, introduced in 1984, was quite a large car, even by international standards. The car was extremely spacious and refined.



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Maruti Omni 1984

This was the second vehicle to be launched by Maruti, one year after the 800, in 1984. It can seat 7-8 passengers within its small proportions and power it around is the 800 cc petrol unit borrowed from the Maruti 800.

The Omni has been a great success in its initial years for it was a great vehicle as a family car, and it is economical. Additionally, it was thrifty to run. Today the Omni is mainly found in the taxi operator market. Not many private takers anymore, and out of the many reasons not to buy an Omni is safety. Overall, Omni remains the cheapest people carrier in the market.



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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/four-wheelers/maruti-gypsy-1985>

Maruti Gypsy 1985

There are not many affordable off-roaders in India, and they are certainly not many petrol-powered ones. Maruti Gypsy was the sole exception in our market. It was inexpensive, light, and relatively easy to maintain.

The Indian army, the Forest Department, preferred the Maruti Gypsy as their transportation choice, owing to the car's go-anywhere ability and ease of maintenance.



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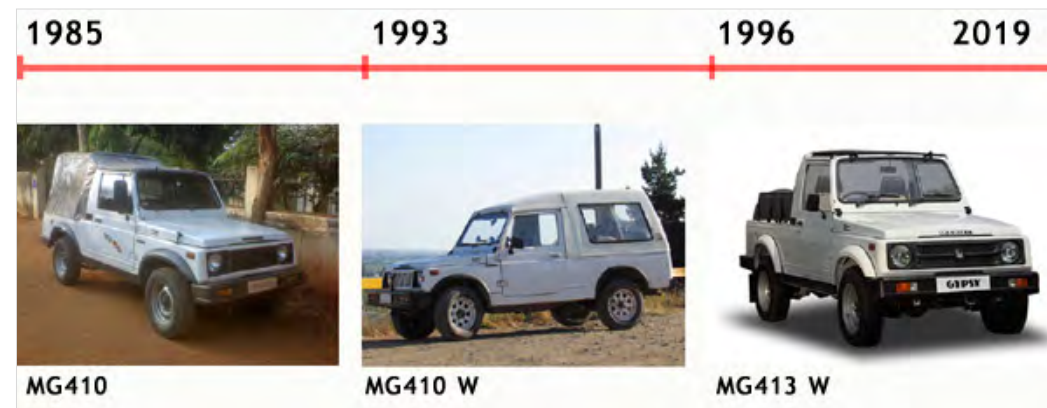
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Source:

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Premier 118NE 1985

Italian beauty fiat 124, which is known in India as premier 118ne being launched in 1985.

118 Ne is a successor of Padmini for premier in India.

We will notice the change of taste with change in a generation. Curves were gone to make way for a sharp and edgy design. The round lamps are replaced by the rectangular ones, same with the tail lamps, Suddenly chrome disappeared from the car, and black finishing took its place. Dark black square grill, black front, and rear bumpers are reflecting that only. This somehow gave it a more metropolitan and modern look.



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Source:

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Maruti 1000 1990

The esteem was first introduced in the first half of 1995. The sedan was exclusively made for the elite class.

Maruti gained a huge reputation with this car. Since then, this car ruled the Indian automobile market for at least 10-11 years until late 2006.

The car was a lot spacious for its size; sitting three adults at the rear was not a problem. Besides, it had a lot of boot space.



History Of Indian Automobile Design (1990)



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<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/four-wheelers/tata-sierra-1991>

TATA Sierra 1991

The first car from the company for private transport. It had to be unique and powerful. Talking about the body, it had a 3-door design. Tata sierra was a rear-wheel-drive SUV with 4wd as an option too.

The real USPS of the SUV Were electric power windows, air conditioning, adjustable steering wheel, and tachometer, first-time-ever in any Indian car. It also had a full glass roof at the portion of the SUV, which is a very unique feature.



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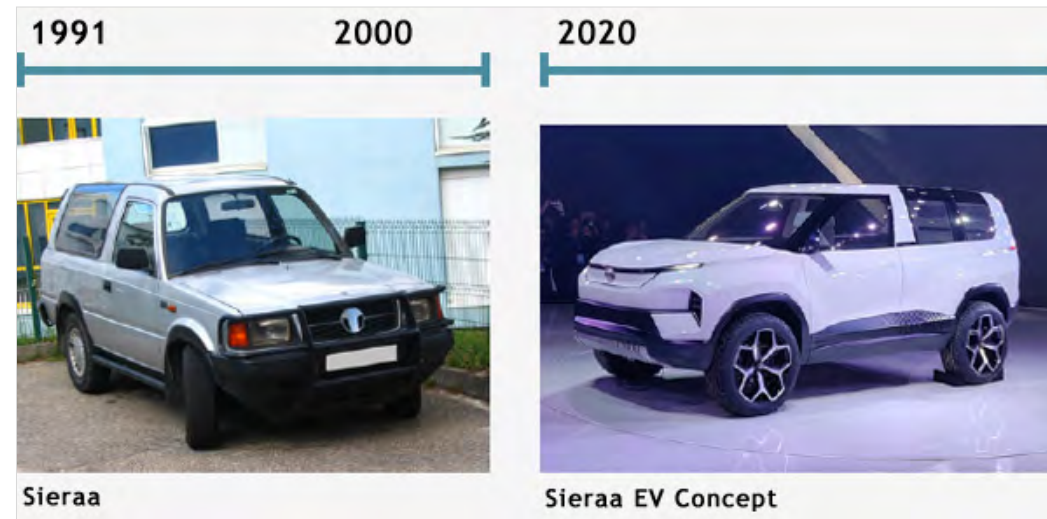
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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/four-wheelers/tata-sumo-1994>

TATA Sumo 1994

Tata motors were known as telco back in the days. Sumant Moolgaokar was the CEO of tata engineering and a locomotive company (telco).

Sumant Moolgaokar, initials of his name are what inspired the name of the SUV. His vision and dedication are what have led to the r&d of tata motors scale heights. He was later awarded the Padma Bhushan award, the third-hights civilian honour by the Government of India in 1990.

Tata sumo – the first UV to be designed in India.



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<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/four-wheelers/force-trax-1998>

Force Trax 1998

In 1988, force motors introduced rough road vehicle Trax.

Simple and durable structure, suited for the severe conditions found in India at that time.

Originally were three models; the town and country, the Trax challenger, and the pick-up.

The Trax can hold up to 13 passengers in the LWB versions.



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TATA Safari 1998

Tata safari made its debut at the 1998 auto expo. Its humongous proportions and those manly looks made it an instant hit. Having a 4WD option, Safari was widely recognized for off-road capabilities. The massive amount of ground clearance further adding to the that go anywhere factor.

Safari's strong character was one of its kind back in the day, and there wasn't any other car that could stand toe-to-toe with its stature. The car's road presence was so strong that it made the traffic around it look petite and insignificant. It was the first time that the Indian market got familiar with the concept of climbing into the car instead of the conventional way of sitting in the car.



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TATA Indica 1998

The design of Indica was well-proportioned and gorgeous. Nothing in India looked half as good. What shocked the industry was the fact that this stunning car came from the hands of a truck-maker with not much experience in car design. And the initial designs developed in-house proved just that. When the Telco Design Team presented Ratan Tata with the initial prototypes for a small car to have half a chance at success, it had to be designed by a world-class design house.

The Indica's USP was its brilliant interior space. Even though the car had small overall dimensions, the smart design allowed the interior to be as expansive as possible.



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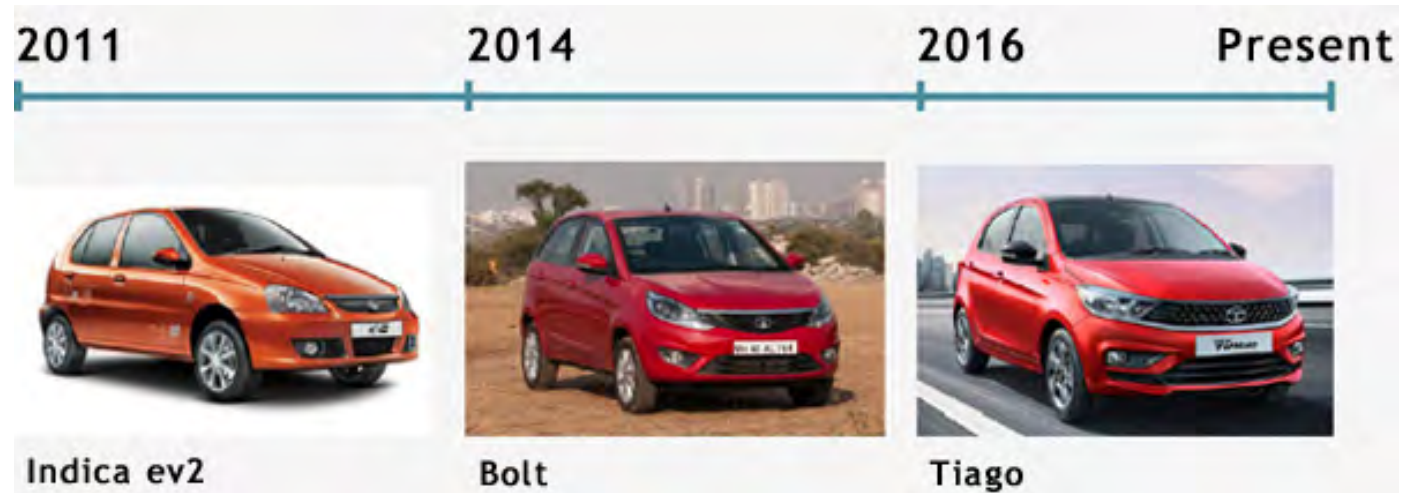
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SAN Strom 1998

The company was established in 1996 what a bunch of people has a passion for building cars and delivering them to the customers. The company's first and the last car was the Storm which came in 1998 in the Indian market.

The San Storm is a roadster capable of carrying two people. It was designed by a French firm called 'Le Mans Group'. Even the engine was provided by the French Carmaker Renault. The car was launched in the late 90s and did make a good mark in the Indian Automotive market.



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Source:

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Rajah Kazwa 1998

Back in the 1990s, the Rajah Groups decided to make a kit sports car, but the idea remained in their minds as there was no partner for the business. Then in 1994, an idea for building an MVP arose. And the idea took the shape of the car in 1998, which was known as Kajah Kazwa.

The wide windshield made it a great MPV to drive because of the increased visibility. Rajah Motors chose a base sheet steel platform on which the car was built. And the body panels were made of fiberglass.

The Kajah Kazwa was spacious, and the comfortable seats, power windows, power steering power mirrors, standard air-conditioning, rear blower, sunroof, and alloy wheels, which are common today, were a luxury at that time.



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TATA Indigo 2002

The Tata Indica was a hit, and there's no question about that. But not just any hit, a legendary one. Tata Motors had revolutionized the car market.

In 2002, Tata had finally come out with a sedan for the personal car market. In the first look, anyone would've gotten confused. It got its entire front end from the Tata Indica, the successful prodigy from tata.

The car seemed proportionate, and nothing like an Indica was forced to carry a boot around. However, the designing elements weren't tweaked unnecessarily. It was a plain but good-looking four-wheeler.



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IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/four-wheelers/mahindra-scorpio-2002>

Mahindra Scorpio 2002

In 1996, the company decided to build its own SUV.

When the Scorpio launched in 2002 as India's first SUV for urban India, it signaled the arrival of the urban SUV.

Designed in India and the UK. Engineered in company and Austria. With American interiors. Seats made in Italy. Panels Sweden. A body in Korea.



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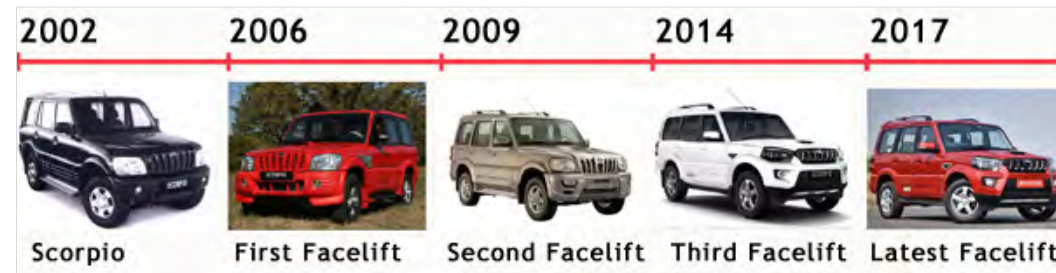
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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/four-wheelers/chinkara-roadster-2003>

Chinkara Roadster 2003

India's won Caterham. A company based in Mumbai under the name chinkara motors launched a small sports car under the name Roadster.

It was the fiber-glass body on the chassis. Moreover, the hot weather made the bodies clumsy and sloppy when kept in the heat for a long time. And if damaged, the whole panel had to be changed, which would cost another fortune.



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History Of Indian Automobile Design (2003)



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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/four-wheelers/icml-motors-extreme-2006>

ICML Motors Extreme 2006

ICML or international Car and Motors Ltd. is a subsidiary of the tractor manufacturing Sonalika Group. Headquartered in Delhi, ICML had two vehicles in its lineup before the BS6 emission norms kicked in. ICML offered a Chevrolet Tavera - rivaling MPV, the Rhino, powered by a 2.0-liter diesel engine. There's no word on when ICML will introduce the BS6 version of its erstwhile model.

The ICML brand was on sale in India. It's famous for its ICML Extreme, ICML Rhino Rx models.



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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/four-wheelers/tata-nano-2008>

TATA Nano 2008

Tata Nano launch was one of the biggest automotive launches that our country has witnessed. Journalists had flown in from different continents, and the entire world was curious to know how a car can be priced at one lakh rupees. Mr. Ratan Tata, while launching the Nano at the 2008 Auto Expo in New Delhi, said that we had given the country an affordable car, and “major part of the country will be able to sit in it”.

Ratan Tata conceived the idea of the world’s cheapest car on a rainy day after he saw a family of four on a bike.

The main target group of customers for Tata Nano are the lower and middle-income families in India, many of whom resisted purchasing four-wheelers mainly due to the price affordability and maintenance cost. Launching Tata Nano gave an opportunity for these groups to buy a car within their means.



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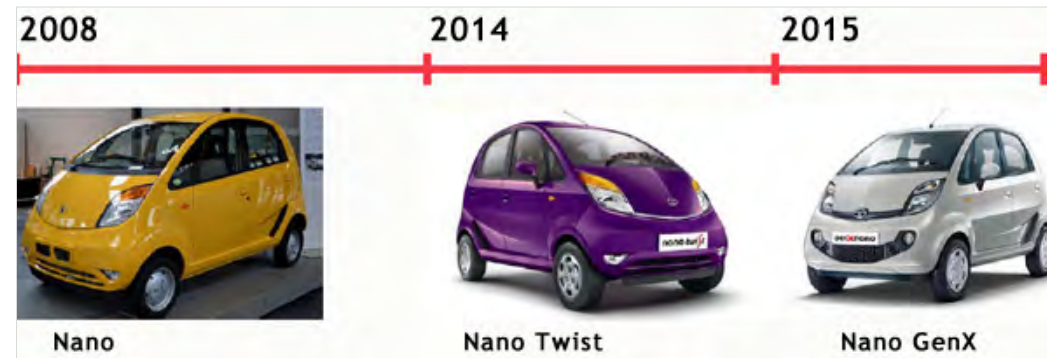
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Source:

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History Of Indian Automobile Design (2008)



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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/four-wheelers/hradyesh-morris-street-2011>

Hradyesh Morris Street 2011

India's First Street Rod has it all from an exclusive custom hand-crafted body design, especially created chassis to a custom fit the powerful engine, performance suspensions, custom brakes drive train to plush interiors. Royal touch with elite quality handmade leather interiors in red, a super finish silver curvaceous body gives Morris Street its retro look. Equipped with the fines features and audio-video, Morris Street introduces begin of the luxury experience to the next level.

Hi builds Morris Street and Hradyesh especially to launch and promote the concept of exclusive hand-crafted Super luxury cars, Hot Rods, Street Rods, Custom cars in India. Morris Street is currently on first of its kind "ALL INDIA ROADSHOW" in which Morris Street is driven on the road to interact with mobile auto enthusiasts covering all the state capitals of India.



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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/four-wheelers/hradyesh-morris-street-2011>

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/four-wheelers/dc-design-avanti-2012>

DC Design Avanti 2012

The DC Avanti is a coupe-styled sports car produced by DC Design. An Indian design firm headed initially by Dilip Chhabria.

The car's frame is made of high composite steel, and the body consists of carbon composite to create a strong yet lightweight vehicle.



History Of Indian Automobile Design (2012)



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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/four-wheelers/mahindra-electric-e20-2013>

Mahindra Electric e20 2013

Mahindra and Mahindra (M&M), which is known for making tough and muscular SUVs, is gradually expanding towards the Electric Vehicle (EV) segment. The company marked its entry in the segment by introducing the 2-door e2o in 2013.

India's only fully electric passenger car, the Mahindra e2o (earlier known as the NXR), is a green answer to city mobility. The four-seater, two-door hatchback uses Lithium-ion batteries that offer a claimed range of 120km per charge and a top speed of 81kmph, which are adequate for most daily city runs. The e2o is ideal for short-distance urban travellers looking for a compact, economical and pollution-free solution.



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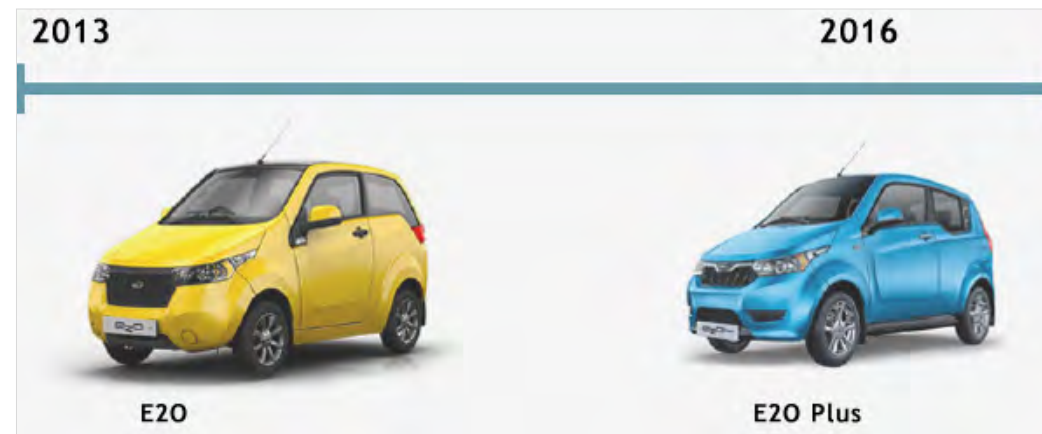
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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/four-wheelers/mahindra-xuv500-2014>

Mahindra XUV500 2014

The Mahindra XUV500 is a compact sport utility vehicle produced by the Indian automobile manufacturers Mahindra and Mahindra. The XUV500 was designed and developed at Mahindra's design and vehicle build center in Nashik and Chennai and is manufactured in Mahindra's Chakan and Nashik plant, India.

This is the first four-wheeler to be styled totally within India. The Bolero was done in Japan, the Scorpio in the united kingdom, and the Xylo in Italy.



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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/four-wheelers/tamo-racemo-2017>

TAMO RaceMO 2017

Tata Motors unveiled its first-ever sports car during the Geneva Motor show in 2017. It was named the RaceMo. The two-seater sports car was an instant hit among car enthusiasts and turned everyone's heads. The excitement surrounding the car was so much that Tata motors decided to branch a new sub-brand called the TAMO for high-performance machines.

The RaceMo was a sub-4 meter car. As a result, in Indian soils, it was eligible for a huge tax-benefit, something which compact-SUVs is famous for. Tata Motors promised to launch the road-legal two-seater race car at the price of Rs.25 lakh. The affordable price for its segment made it extremely attractive for performance enthusiasts who could only lay their hands upon big bulky sedans and SUVs.

It was low, sleek, stylish, angular, and much more at the same time. It also had scissor doors that opened like Lamborghinis. The Tata RaceMo also had the privilege of being designed by Marcello Gandini, the mastermind designer behind many famous Lamborghinis and Ferraris.



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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/four-wheelers/vazirani-shul-2018>

VAZIRANI Shul 2018

The Vazirani Shul has a very distinct profile even by supercar standards. The front section of the car comprises a sharp Y-shaped 3-strip LED headlight cluster. Below the headlamp lies a massive air-intake mesh on either side with a smaller triangular cut-out in the middle. Moving to the side, the aggressive intake lines become even more aggressive and extend across the entire door area. Going by the appearance, the car is going to be equipped with a rear-mounted gasoline engine which explains the presence of the intake vents at the end of the door. Another eye-catching element is the unique 5-spoke rim shrouded by the fat low-profile rubber specially designed by Michelin.

The Vazirani shul's rear profile stands out the most on the entire car. It starts with the minimal rear window flanked by passive air vents on either side. Below the window lies the very uniquely placed exhaust outlet. There is also a "Gran Turismo" logo located above the exhaust, notifying the contribution of Kazunori Yamauchi. Just behind the exhaust vent lie two fighter-jet-inspired wings to direct the air away with minimal disturbance. A very complex network of diffusers, an integrated spoiler, and winglets complete the Vazirani Shul's derriere with pronounced C-shaped LED tail lamps.



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Source:

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History Of Indian Automobile Design (2018)



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Source:

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TATA Harrier 2019

In production guise, the Harrier is based on Land Rover's D8 architecture that underpins the Land Rover Discovery Sport. It's a monocoque platform that's been named OMEGARC. The Harrier brings a sound system sourced from JBL, a non-independent torsion beam setup for the rear suspension, and the engine and transmission are for Fiat. Also, the Harrier is robust, comes loaded with features, scores well on space, comfort, and good cabin quality rides well over bad roads and looks striking.

It features a floating roof design with bold chrome finishers and Harrier branding. The front gets Xenon HID projector headlamps, dual-tone front bumper with satin silver chin guard, dual function LED DRLs with turn indicators, and contemporary SUV design proportions. The vehicle gets an aggressive stance with flared wheel arches wrapped in 235/65 R17 wide tires. The outer mirror with logo projection completes the style element.



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Conclusion

This study has shown that the Indian automobile industry started importing luxury vehicles for royal families. During the 1950s, India began assembling foreign cars in our country. Later some Indian automobile manufacturers brought successful British family cars to the Indian market. These vehicles further evolve with Indian conditions. The Indian car industry started to thrive in the 1980s.

The change in design with change in generation, curves were gone to make way for a sharp and edgy design. The round lamps are replaced by the rectangular ones, same with the tail lamps. Suddenly chrome disappeared from the car, and black finishing took its place. At the end of the 1990s, we saw Indian car makers started designing cars indigenously. Also, the 1990s and 2000s were dominated by the small hatchback Maruti 800, which shows the Indian need for an affordable, practical, and personal car. From the 2010s to 2020s, we have seen amazing designs and innovations from Indian carmakers such as Nano, Avanti, Shul, Harrier, Morris, and e2o. Also, facelifts, sharp lines, large grilles, dual-tone colours, floating roofs, led DRL, etc. become an essential element of design improvement in the last decade. In recent years Indian automotive industry is rapidly growing with emerging electric car makers and automotive design studios are increasing.



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Design Resource

Timeline of Indian Automobile

Iconic cars

by

Dnyaneshwar Pawar and Prof. Malhotra Sugandh
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/timeline-indian-automobile/links>

Links

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Automotive_industry_in_India#:~:text=In%201897%2C%20the%20first%20car,-Dodge%2C%20and%20Fiat%20products%20respectively.
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