

Meet Vijay Parmar

Founder

Rallye Raid de Himalaya – 1999 to 2018

Indian National TSD Rally Championship – 6 Rallies

Chief Instructor Triumph Training Academy 2015-

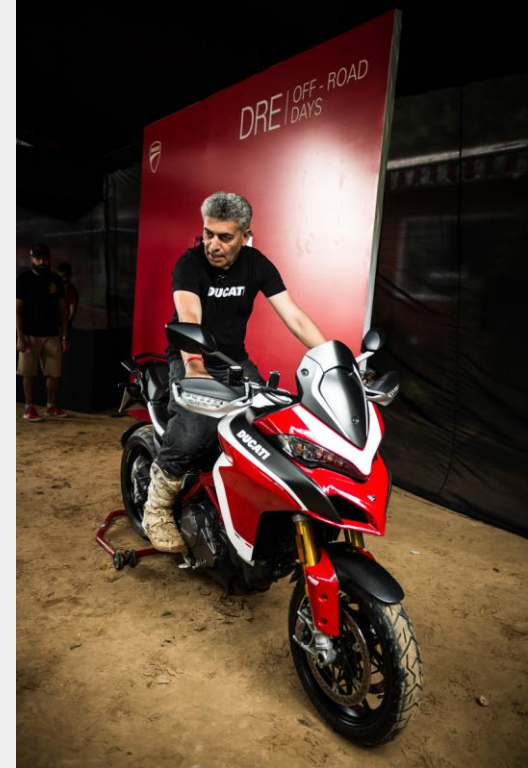
Ducati Rider Experience (DRE) Instructor 2016-

Ride Leader BMW Motorrad Mountain Safari 2018

Ride Leader/ Instructor Triumph Tiger Trails 2016-

CEO Xploearth 2005-

President, Himalayan Motorsport Assn 1999-



Adventurer

The first motorcyclist in the world to reach Daulat Beg Oldie.

DBO is India's northern most military outpost Since 1938!

Led the first ever motorcycle expedition to the Karakoram Pass (5661 mtrs) in April 2019 facing temperatures below minus 37 celsius!!



Competitor

Vijay took part in the Xtreme Moto category of the Rally Desert Storm in 2013 -15.

Podium finishes in 2013
And 2015 with 1st in Gp A!

Took part in the India Baja in 2016 and finished 3rd.

Stood back from active two wheel motorsport in 2018, at the age of 58, after being in competitive motorsport from 1988 to 2018 – all of 30 years!



Shaft Drive-Vijay's Monthly column for Fast Bikes magazine is based solely on all things ADV.

From selecting a moto to setting it up and deciding whether to use panniers or soft luggage – everything is covered in his column.

Safety tips take up a large part of the advice and 42 years of motorcycling has the text reeking of experience!

Shaft drive

Looking around for that perfect ADV to ride off into the sunset and the adventures that lay beyond? Let off-road specialist Vijay Parmar guide you to the right one

The Triumph Tiger XCA, the BMW R 1200 GS, the Ducati Multistrada 1200S, Honda's Africa Twin – even the Himalayan or the G 310 GS. All seem to me in my dreams. Singing like sirens, luring me to a possible shipwreck on a rocky shore. How does one choose between thoroughbred stallions? Took the Himalayan out with that definition I guess. The G 310 GS merely hangs in with its fingernails. The others, firmly in the fight right now, will probably lose ground to lighter, more powerful dual-sport machines I can't help but adore.

The ADV motorcycle is a compromise, designed to cross beautifully carpeted tarmac and the sands of Morocco alike, with a fair degree of competence on all surfaces. But how do you choose?

Very few of us actually review, study, examine and assess before buying. It's always because of 'a deal' or because a friend recently bought one that you get the irresistible urge to be in his 'I'd Pro 2.1 boots. Hardly has the soles of the departing Akrapovic died down that you have made up your mind. You briefly look about, pretending to contemplate. You finally go down the "I'll have what he's having" route and slap

down your credit card. Your choice is made. Three months later, the inside of your thighs having been burned black by the heat of a big bore engine in traffic, your bike comes up for sale. What's good for your friend may be a disaster for you.

The few of us that do the research pore endlessly over the spec sheet. "Seat height difference being 2 mm lower convinced me", said a friend. I gently pointed out that more than half his riding time, on a mix of gravel and tarmac, would be spent standing, knees comfortably coaxed in the curve of the tank, chin over the handlebars, staring into the distance completely oblivious to the manically sliding rear wheel. Where, in this stupor, ride into the sunset, was the seat height going to play a major role? More to the point would have been the distance between the pegs and the seat which would've decided the angling of the knees when seated. Even a few degrees can make the difference between a comfortable ride and one where you stand, even on tarmac, to straighten out those creaking joints!

When we choose our steel, we need to ride the bike, for at least 200 kilometres, before you can tell whether it fits or not. The normal dealership ride will at most allow you to sit in 3rd gear in heavy traffic and before the novelty of the quick-shifter has worn off of the ride is done! Take the bike out for a long ride. Gear up as if you were off to Ladakh. Spend the day taking in both the twists as well as the long straight, gravel and tarmac. If there is a choice to be made, ride all options on a long trial on consecutive days, so you clearly remember yesterday's ride.

That being said, many of the small niggles can easily be fixed, by adjustment, or accessories. Almost all ADV bikes need handlebar risers and ones installed make all the difference in riding stance, especially for taller jockeys. Remember the bike will need to be fitted to you and won't fit right out of the box. Narrow footpegs can give way to wider ones. Mismatched gear ratios can't. Decide what can be fixed and what can't!

Eventually, ignore the spec sheet, ignore your friends' choices, but never ignore your gut feeling. Motorcycling is visceral. Choose after riding the bike. Not short, but long. Not once, but many times.

Your choice of an adventure bike should be based on the fit, feel, balance and joy – some of which have a yadda-yadda, or as even mentioned on the spec sheet! If you can't stop grinning after your ride – that bike is for you! 🍻



VIJAY PARMAR

COLUMN

Shaft drive

There's a whole wide world out there for riders who are not afraid to get out of their comfort zone and experience for themselves the sights and sounds that can never be enjoyed from the supposed luxury of the couch, says Vijay

There are essentially two types of ADV bike owners. The ones who know what their bikes can do and the ones who don't. The first will never ride off pavement and constitute the equivalent of the soccer mom. Occasionally they will attend a Biker Cafes constitute their depth of field. Occasionally they will attend a Biker Festival in the neighbourhood but nothing more than that. They are those that don't know what their bikes are fully capable of and are too afraid to try anything more than just a straight-line dash to the gas pump – once a month!

Then comes the second kind who know what their bikes can do. They will plan and execute journeys of thousands of kilometres, maybe travel across the world! For them to safely ride 800km a day on tarmac highways is not unusual. So how do they do it? What makes them so different from the ADV owner who can't venture out of his comfort zone and is reduced to a fretting wreck if the bike tips over at standstill!

Curiosity starts the change from a 'sometimes rider' to an 'advised wanderer'. It can be the desire to visit the old painter at Darvaganj, who hand stripes the gold lines on bullet tanks or it may be the 'must-do' Manali to Leh highway that starts it all. An unexpected urge to ride the Spice Trail that crosses the coffee and

cashew plantations of Chikmagalur. Anything. Even a name. A friend was so fired up by the name 'Zing-Zing Bar' that he had to load up his ADV bike, ride through fog and rain over Rohang and just see for himself! It was so disappointing – just a right hand hairpin on the climb to Baralaha La – that he rode onward, spontaneously and unplanned, for the next two weeks. He saw Ladakh, resplendent in the fall, had his petrol cache robbed in Zaskar, stayed in a monastery when he ran out of money, borrowed some from the Deputy Commissioner in Kargil, spent three days holed up in Khamti,

before riding the Mughal Road home. He never really said one whether he returned the loan but it changed the way he looked at travel aboard a motorcycle. The world started to become his oyster. Riding out, spontaneously and far, was to become the best motorcycle training he ever had.

Wanderlust. It drives the adventurer to seek out the unknown, the outlandish. Most of these ADV riders scan maps incessantly, pore over the stories of other travellers, even going back a century at times. Today Google Maps gives you access to the world – first hand. The web is an unlimited storehouse of knowledge and similar interest groups allow such detailed sharing that it almost takes the surprise of

discovery away. A trip to Mongolia or Patagonia is no longer a dream but a very real possibility. Let the wanderlust take you over.

Money. The more you are willing to put in the further you can go. At least that's what logic dictates. Strangely, it's not the rich but the average that have had the most wonderful and eventful rides around the globe. Some work their way through the rides, often returning home spending months working, replenishing their cash reserves. Then they reboot their journeys. A six-month PhD in 'Travel on a Motorcycle' teaches more than years spent studying Quantum Physics. The resolution of daily problems along the way will make you totally grounded and unflappable – a master of damage control!

Six months on a motorcycle will change you completely. From an insufferable corporate complainer, constantly berating hotel housekeeping, you will learn to sleep in the wilderness with a small tarp, one end tied to the handlebars, the other pegged to the ground. And you will appreciate your Taj Mahal because it kept most of the drizzle away from your clothes! Become curious. Take out that ADV beast from the garage and make a world of your own. The whole wide world awaits! 🍻



VIJAY PARMAR

COLUMN



You want to do that? Buy the right bike, put your back to the back, laugh last month!



Take out that ADV beast from your garage and make a new comfort zone

Motorsport

Vijay's passion for motorsport matured when he crossed Ladakh in a VW Beetle in 1996, and when he had the completely insane idea for a rally across the frozen plains of Rupshu. Known as the Raid-de-Himalaya, this 2500km-long annual celebration of insanity is now 20 years old.

The Mughal Rally is another brainchild. To take a hundred cars, on the route that Akbar used to conquer Kashmir (and one that Jehangir perished on) seemed a great way to spend a weekend. Ten years into this conquest of the Pir Panjal, Vijay is constantly looking to newer frontiers. In 2019, he took his RE Himalayan to the Karakoram Pass – the northernmost tip of India-becoming the first civilian to set foot there!



Motorsport

Vijay co-founded the Raid de Himalaya in 1999.

The world's highest rally is today 20 years old!

Overseeing 250 4x4's and motorcycles running the stages in Ladakh, Lahaul, Spiti and Zaskar is a mammoth task.

Himalayan Motorsport and Xplorearth run it like a military operation. Vijay heads both!



Motorsport

In 2016, Vijay introduced the Moto-Adventure category for big bore bikes. It is the finest real Himalayan adventure!

Set in an unreal landscape the event runs in the most hostile terrain and weather known to man!

Tracking motorcycles and providing rescue facilities with air ambulance in the remotest areas is Himalayan Motorsport's speciality. Vijay has been President of this team for 20 years!



Rides and Training

As the Ride Leader for the Tiger Trails Splendid Spiti, since its inception in 2016, the design, difficulty levels and the safe execution of the ride have been Vijay's creation and responsibility.

The Tiger Trails Thar Desert Ride has also been a great Training and Experience ride being entirely curated by Xploreearth – Vijay's adventure company!

‘The high mountains, deserts and jungles- “All are our playgrounds” he muses!



Rides and Training

In August 2018 the BMW Motorrad Mountain Safari took 22 riders aboard the 1200 GS from Delhi to Leh via Manali, Pangji, Kishtwar, Kashmir, Kargil and Zanskar!

The tough ride lasted 13 days and covered over 3500 kms.

Vijay led the epic ride and the experience was, according to him, 'Once in a Lifetime'.



Rides and Training

In May 2016 Vijay attended the Ducati Rider Experience Instructor Certification Program in Bangkok, Thailand, and cleared it.

In 2017, Ducati invited him to clear the updated course anew and asked him to start the DRE Off Road Days program.

The first DRE Off Road Days Training was held in Gurgaon at the Off Road Adventure Zone Facility and was a huge success, with Vijay as the Chief Instructor.

This year's program is scheduled in October and promises to be as successful as before!



Recognition

Vijay was honoured with a 'Lifetime Contribution To Motorcycling' Award at the India Bike Week ! Here Mark Wilsmore, owner of the Ace Café, London looks on benignly.

'It wasn't so tough lifting the 13 kg trophy with one hand' Vijay said, when asked how it felt to be honoured!



Nomad

xplor^{earth}

When not writing, riding or training riders half his age, Vijay spends his waking hours exploring the Western Himalayas. On a motorcycle.

For the sheer joy of it!

