

# Life lessons on a Lambretta

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April 5, 2023



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*Namma de vandi, mumbi pote* (Let our scooter get ahead) echoed through nippy and rainy (then) Bangalore mornings each time we set out as a tight-knit wedge of four. Sometimes we sang it together, so it sounded like we were a family of 'Born Agains' zealously singing praise and worship, except that the praise and worship were to the Lambretta.

The scooter never went beyond 40 km per hour! But my five-year-old self believed it would get us ahead of all the other vehicles on the road, and so my eyes remained glued to the speedometer. At one point, I remember asking my father, "*Appah*, I think your speedometer is broken."

"You think so?" He would ask, jostling the crisp Bengaluru air between his teeth. "Let's go faster. We can check if it is broken," I would shout back.

One day, he sang the same song when he cycled us to school. How can one possibly believe a bicycle could get ahead of other vehicles?

Over the years, I inquired about his songs and why he sang them but never got an answer. All he said was that we should sing along. As we got older, he switched to a one: *Chalti ka naam gaadi*.

These vehicular references seemed to be part of my father's idiomatic repertoire, and he sprinkled these references to life and living instantaneously—and most of them were his own creations except for the 1958 classic screwball and slapstick comedy. Much later, as a grown woman, I asked him why he made us sing that innocuous song: *Namma de vandi, mumbi pote*.

He said, "*Mole*, as a young thing, all you cared about was spending time with your old man, who was away most of the time. I don't think you remember being annoyed at how slow we were or the many times I made you sing it. Rather, you seem to remember all the trips we made all over town as you grasped the head of the Lambi in your tiny hands. Look at yourself now. You cycle, you ride a bike, and you also sing when you do all of these things, and you do it more when you have to navigate a Bengaluru that is very unlike the one you grew up in. I suppose I've taught you in song and cycling the concepts of persistence, patience, and balance—with steep climbs and headwinds, it can be difficult to keep going. But it's in those moments when I am struggling to push forward that I remind myself that the journey is worth it. The important lesson is that on a bike, you have to find the right balance between speed and control. Life is the same way. We need to find a balance between taking risks and being cautious, between working hard and making time to relax."

So the Sunny song *Nammade vandi mumbo pote* rings true long after my father's passing.