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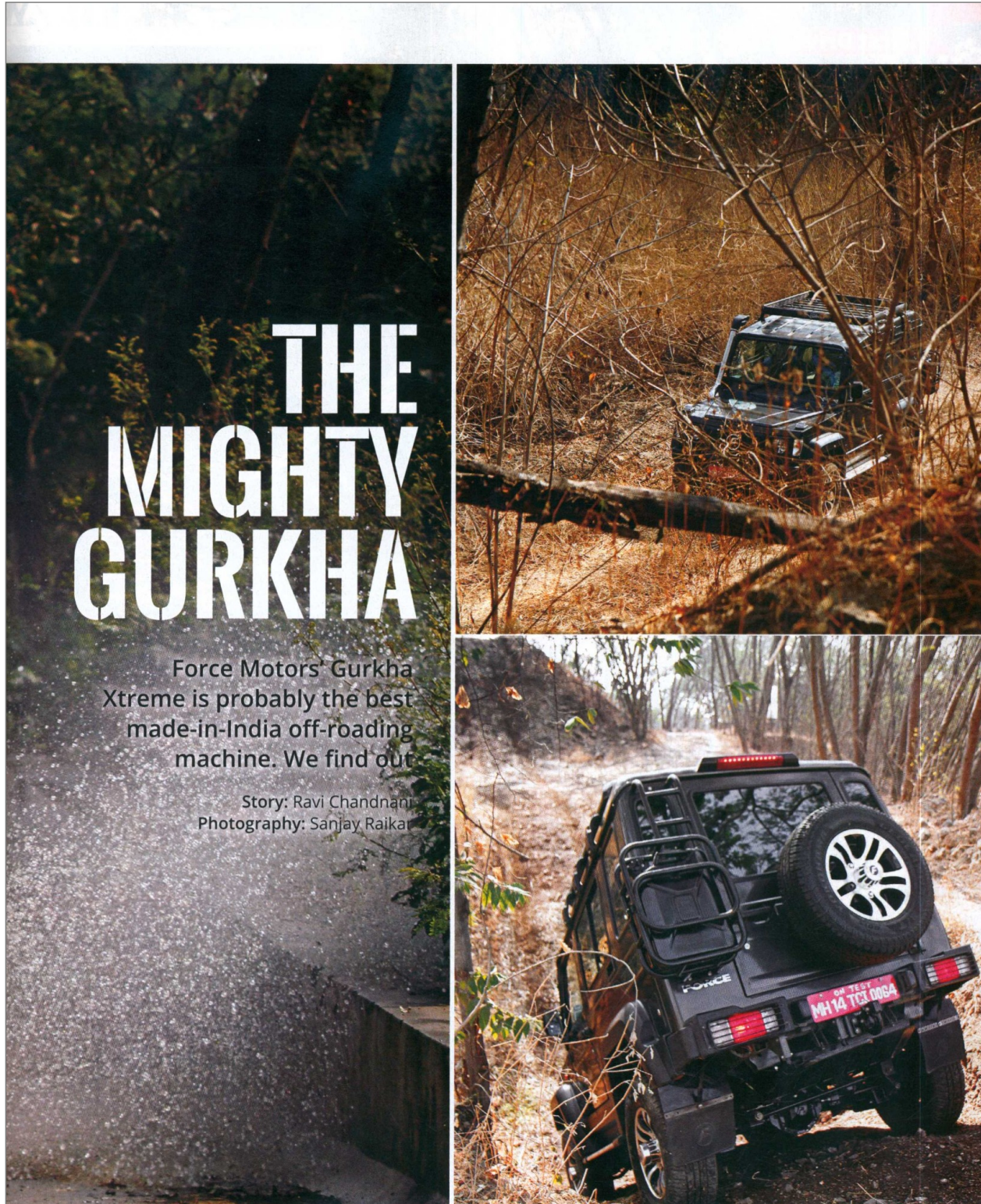


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**FORCE GURKHA
XTREME**
More power and
capability in an already
impressive vehicle

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THE MIGHTY GURKHA

Force Motors' Gurkha Xtreme is probably the best made-in-India off-roading machine. We find out

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(Left) Interior could be hosed down if it gets too dirty



(Above) A snorkel equips the Xtreme to wade through water

IT IS ALMOST ALWAYS THAT THE QUIET, SHY, AND UNDERSTATED types are the ones who prove to be the best in any field and recently we were face to face with such a vehicle that proves its mettle without making any sound. It is called Force Gurkha Xtreme. Yes, it looks old-school and sounds like one, too, but once you get in the driver's seat, this mighty beast can help you conquer the toughest terrain that stands between you and glory. Read on to see how the Force Gurkha Xtreme stakes a claim to being the best off-roading machine you can buy today.

To begin with, it is the sheer size of the Xtreme that intimidates anyone who stands in its way. It reminded me of the erstwhile

Mercedes G-Wagon that forms the foundation for this *desi* off-roader. The Xtreme stays true to the original G-Wagon's design and it looks pretty mighty from any angle. It is two metres tall, 1.8 metres wide, has a ground clearance of 210 millimetres, and huge 16-inch wheels shod with 245/70 radial tyres. These dimensions coupled with angular metal body panels, a snorkel, a roof-mounted carrier, an optional auxiliary jerry can mounted on a small ladder at the back, and a full-size spare wheel mounted on the tail-gate ably proclaim the Gurkha's extreme "go-anywhere" attitude.

Inside, things are as nominal as they can get — after all, this is a three-door off-roader. The dashboard is an old-school unit with rectangular air-con ducts at the centre and circular ones on either side. There is a big metal piece jutting out from just under the a-c controls for mounting a stereo system or a radio set in case you decide to enter a competition. The steering wheel is big and the instrument console is old-school with a few easy-to-read analogue dials on it. That pretty much sums up the interior. Oh, wait, there are two levers on each side of the transmission tunnel for locking the differentials. Yes, Force Motors have kept things pretty mechanical as the system is tried and tested and works perfectly well. At the back are two benches that face each other and can accommodate at least four grown-up adults. Since the Xtreme is two metres tall and almost similar in width, there is ample knee-, leg-, and head-room inside the cabin.

Let's now move on to the biggest change that this Gurkha brings to the table. However, before that a brief

history lesson. Now, we all are aware of the fact that Force Motors have been closely associated with Mercedes-Benz for a very long time and we have seen products from the company that bear resemblance to vehicles that were once made by the German manufacturers. Even today, Force Motors use Mercedes technology and, thanks to this Indo-German venture, the Xtreme comes with a former Mercedes engine: the OM 611 diesel engine, to be exact. This 2,149-cc, in-line four-cylinder, DOHC engine produces a healthy 140 PS at 3,800 rpm and 321 Nm between 1,600 and 2,400 rpm, which is a big jump from the earlier unit that still powers the Force Gurkha Xplorer. The engine is mated to a new G 32/5, five-speed manual gearbox with an integrated transfer case. However, the bump in power and torque was the crucial piece of puzzle missing from earlier Gurkha and, owing to >



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Coil springs and sturdy axles take care of articulation

FORCE GURKHA XTREME

- **Price:** Rs 12.99 lakh (ex-showroom)
- **Engine:** 2,149 cc, in-line four, turbo-diesel
- **Max Power:** 140 PS @ 3,800 rpm
- **Max Torque:** 321 Nm @ 1,600-2,400 rpm
- **Transmission:** Five-speed, manual, four-wheel drive
- **Suspension:** Multi-link with Pan Hard rod front and rear
- **Approach Angle:** 44°
- **Departure Angle:** 40°
- **Ramp Breakover Angle:** 30°
- **Ground Clearance:** 210 mm
- **Wheels:** 245/70 R16

Force Motors' decision to go in for a more powerful and torquier engine, the Xtreme has become much more capable than before. It is not the smoothest engine out there but then, again, the Gurkha is also not a regular car. The engine actually goes well with the rugged design and character of the Xtreme. I actually ended up liking the unique rawness of the engine that makes me appreciate the fact that it can handle almost any kind of incline and decline without any fuss.

As soon as I got into the Xtreme and started the engine, the diesel chatter made its way into the cabin. Ignoring that I shifted the long-throw gearbox into first and off we went. I wasn't surprised to see how smoothly the torque came in and provided enough push to move forward without any effort. It is this massive amount of torque that helped us go around Force Motors' off-road test facility with minimal effort. But before I get into the details of how well the Xtreme does on an extreme course, let me tell you a bit about the suspension.

Force Motors have worked on the suspension of the Gurkha Xtreme by providing coil springs on all four corners. They have also fitted a sturdy rigid front axle to help the Xtreme navigate through sizeable undulations with ease. This, combined with a ladder frame, has actually made a big difference to the way the Xtreme behaves while off-roading.



The course at the Force facility is a place where the company's RFC or Rain Forest Challenge vehicles were once tested. I have had the privilege of driving the RFC Gurkha at the same test course and I was fully aware of what that beast could do. With that at the back of my mind I was a little sceptical about how a bog-stock Xtreme was going to tackle the tough terrain. I was assured by an accompanying Force Motors engineer that I could do it since the Xtreme has class-leading 44° approach and 40° departure angles with 30° ramp breakover angle; so, technically, nothing much could go wrong.

After driving around the factory a bit it was time to take on the extreme course. The first obstacle was quite a steep entry into a ditch that was slightly wider but a lot taller than the Gurkha. With the gearbox in first and four-low engaged, I went in and, slowly but steadily, the Xtreme entered the extremely steep ditch without ever feeling like it's going to tip over on its roof. Whoa! That was fun and quite easy, I must confess. The engine braking while descending into the ditch kept everything in check and all I was doing was controlling the brakes and keeping the steering wheel straight. This made me realize all the effort the engineers have put into making the Xtreme a remarkable off-roader.

Once through this and I was staring straight up at a 50-degree incline that looked like a hillock. I was told that we could get over that incline in second gear and, trusting the engineer, I simply nailed the throttle and headed straight up looking at the sky and within seconds we were at the top and once again the Xtreme made it through without breaking into a sweat. This

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Force Gurkha Xtreme **First Drive**

Gurkha has surely gotten my attention. On the other side of the "mini hill" was a descent as steep as the incline, but this time I had no doubt in my mind that the Xtreme would tackle it easily. And, sure, it went down without a hitch.

Next up were 40-degree incline and decline sections and here I got to see the amazing crawling power of the Gurkha Xtreme. As we approached an incline, I gently pushed the throttle a bit and then slowly lifted my foot from it to watch the Gurkha climb a 40° incline without any input from me; in fact, I enjoyed it so much that I went for it again and again.

By now I was impressed by the Gurkha Xtreme's capability with me, a novice, in the driver's seat. However, there was something more left for the Gurkha Xtreme to show off. This was the articulation section where at least one wheel was always off the dirt and, quite honestly, while going through this section the four-wheel torque delivery and excellent engineering of this SUV was highlighted for me to appreciate. The Xtreme went through this section as if it were made for being driven on such terrain. This was being effortless at its best. Even through the water-wading test, which was done at another part of the facility, the Xtreme was simply very good. It waded through a lot of water without any problem. I was told that it can actually cross rivers with ease, for its water-wading limit is 550 mm. What held me spellbound was the fact that the company has tested the Xtreme with water coming right over its bonnet, which is well over 550 mm. Now, that is literally Xtreme.

Now it was time for me to go at it again and again and then some more. I thoroughly enjoyed what the Gurkha Xtreme had to offer and it was quite a lot. I must say that the new suspension has improved the ride quality of the Gurkha.

At Rs 12.99 lakh (ex-showroom) the Xtreme is more expensive than its competition but at this price you get a Gurkha that has RFC-winning pedigree, which makes it the best made-in-India off-roader on offer. It has go-anywhere capability, a good ride quality, trusted equipment, and a great stance. It surely has shaken up the segment and I hope Force Motors promote it well, because the Xtreme deserves to be on top of the list for any off-roading enthusiast. 🇮🇳



I WAS IMPRESSED BY THE GURKHA XTREME'S CAPABILITY WITH ME, A NOVICE, IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

