

I Want to Ride a Motorbike

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Level 4

This is Diya.

At age 8, she saw a woman on a bike. The image stuck in her head.



At age 9, her father took a shortcut through a one-way and was cut off by a woman driving a car. Even though it was his fault, he muttered, "Lady drivers." Diya never forgot this.

8 years

At age 11, she sat in a plane piloted by two women. She waited to meet them after the flight, and even took a photo with them!

9 years

At age 12, she became the best cyclist in her society. She won most races!

11 years





Now, at age 14, Diya knows she wants to be a pilot.
But first, she will ride a motorbike.



Diya tells her neighbour Shayan about the bike she wants.
“Girls can’t ride motorbikes. How many girl riders have you ever seen?” he says.
“There are many! You just don’t know,” Diya tells him.

Diya keeps telling Appa and Amma about bikes and motorbikes.

“Appa, did you know that bikes are safer than scooters?”

“Amma, did you see that article I sent you? Eighteen women biker groups across India! They do long rides together every year. I also want to go!”

“Shayan told me his cousin drove from Delhi to Bangalore on his motorbike. Imagine that!”

“Diya, if you spent even half this time on Maths, you would do much better on your tests. Go do your homework,” says Appa.





Diya is finishing her homework, when her mother comes to her room with a book.



“What’s this, Amma?”

“It’s a photo album, from when I was in college.”



Diya excitedly pores over the photos. “Is that Anita Chithi on a motorbike?” she asks.

Anita Chithi lives in Mumbai. She’s Amma’s best friend and Diya’s favourite aunt.



Over the next few weeks, Diya thinks a lot about Anita Chithi and her Yamaha. She later asks Amma if she can call Anita Chithi.

Farah Aunty picks up.

“Hello Aunty, this is Diya. How are you? Is Anita Chithi there?”

“Oh hi Diya! Wait, I’ll just give Anita the phone.”

Diya gets straight to the point. “Anita Chithi, you know what? Amma showed me a photo of your Yamaha!”



Anita takes a moment to reply, “Oh, she still has those photos.”

Diya replies, “That’s so cool, Chithi! I had no idea. I love motorbikes, but Appa thinks I shouldn’t ride. He says it’s not for girls. Everybody says women can’t ride. It’s so irritating,” Diya hesitates before continuing. “Will you teach me please?”



Amma overhears this, and is surprised. She smiles.





Anita Chithi is as surprised. “You need to first get a Learner’s License, Diya. You can only do that when you’re 16.”

“Yes, that’s next year. But I want to learn from you. Will you please teach me?”

“I’d first have to check with your parents...”

Diya looks hopefully at Amma. Amma nods.



“Amma says yes! And I can tell Appa later, like you did,” she says.

“No no, you shouldn’t. Why don’t I speak to Amma and we’ll see how to ask your father, okay?”

“Okay, thank you Chithi!”

“I understand why your Appa is worried. You have to remember, the most important thing is to be safe and considerate — as a rider and as a person. Biking is fun, but it matters more what kind of rider you are than how fast you go.”



That night, while Diya is in her room, she overhears Amma and Appa.
“Why did you show her that photo? Now she won’t drop it,” says Appa.
“She wants to be independent. Isn’t that a good thing?” replies Amma.
“She can take the bus. Why a motorbike? It’s not safe!”
“You congratulated Rahul so enthusiastically on his Learner’s Licence. Why this double standard?”
Diya is sad. Appa will never understand.





The next evening, Shayan and Diya race home from the cricket ground as usual. Shayan is so bent on winning, that he swerves ahead, narrowly missing a young child by the side of the lane.

“I won! See? Even on a cycle, I’m better.” says Shayan.

“You could have hit that little boy. What is wrong with you?” Diya says. She runs up to the boy to comfort him, unaware that Appa is watching from upstairs.

A few days later, Appa walks into Diya's room while she's playing a game on the computer. "So I heard you called Anita?" Diya looks up, nervous.

"Appa, please, Chithi said she'll teach me, so it's safe. I've started saving for it also. You know, bikes are actually safer than scooters. They have bigger wheels..."

"You know this much about bikes, but how much do you know about helmets?" Appa says.

Diya is confused.

"You're first going to have to buy a helmet. You need to be safe," says Appa.

"Does that mean Chithi can teach me?"

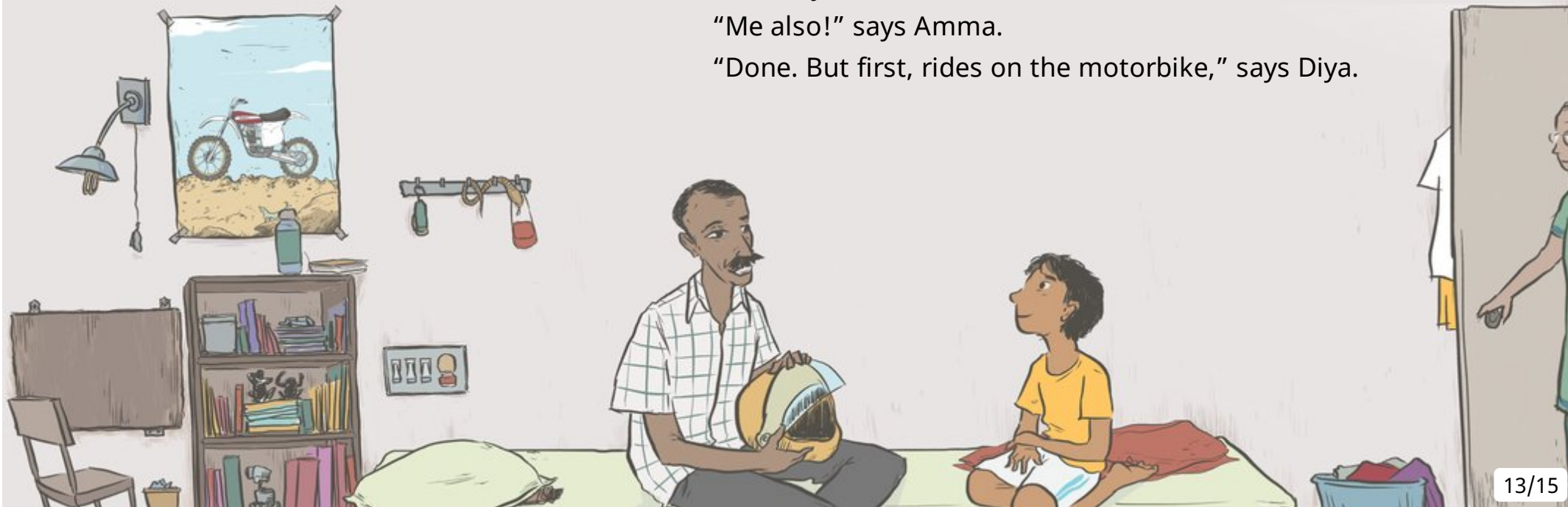
"Yes, when you go to Mumbai next year. If you still want to learn."

"Thank you Appa!" She hugs her father.

"In exchange, when you become a pilot, you have to fly me everywhere."

"Me also!" says Amma.

"Done. But first, rides on the motorbike," says Diya.





Pioneering women bike riders around the world:

- **Annie Londonderry** was a Latvian immigrant to the United States who in 1894–95 became the first woman to bicycle around the world.
- The American civil rights leader, **Susan B Anthony**, wrote in 1896, “I think the bicycle has done more to emancipate women than any one thing in the world. It gives women a feeling of freedom and self-reliance.”
- **Bessie Stringfield**, an African-American female motorcyclist, in the 1930s (decades before the Civil Rights Movement), rode across America countless times, and even entered men’s motorcycle races (only to be denied the winning prize when they found out she was a woman).
- **Elsbeth Beard**, architect and motorcyclist, is noted as being one of the first women to ride a motorcycle around the world, between 1982-1984.
- **Roshni Sharma** is the first Indian woman to ride a motorbike from Kanyakumari to Kashmir in 2014.
- In 2018, an all-women biker contingent from the Border Security Force (BSF) called ‘**Seema Bhavani**’ or **Border Bravehearts** were part of the Indian Republic Day Parade for the first time ever!



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I Want to Ride a Motorbike

(English)

Diya's fascinated by motorbikes. She can't wait to turn sixteen and ride one. Especially after Diya finds out that her aunt is a biker! A story about identity and the freedom to choose.

This is a Level 4 book for children who can read fluently and with confidence.



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