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**THE ACE OF GREEN**  
TOYOTA CAMRY HYBRID

**76**

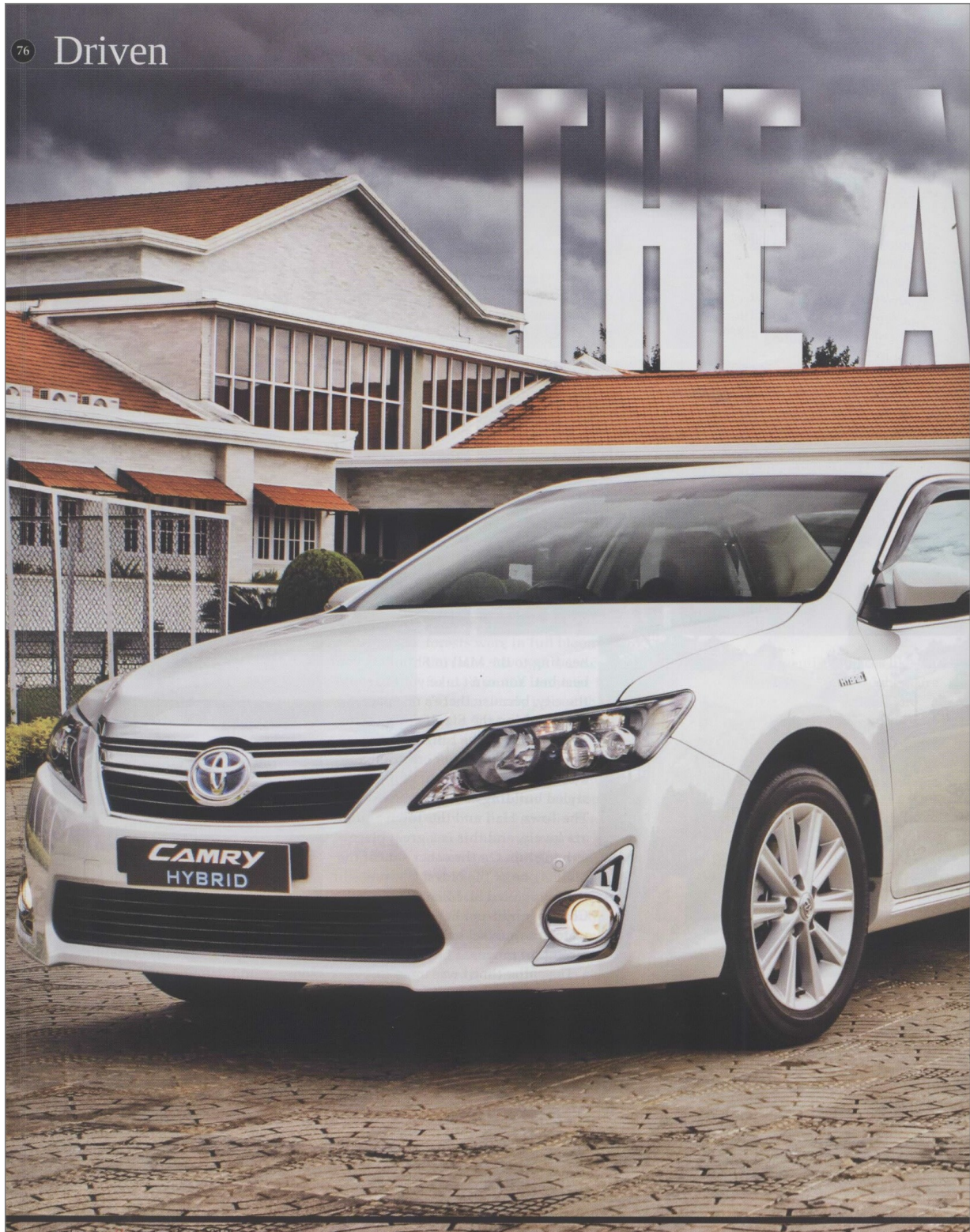


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Toyota Camry Hybrid 77

# AGE OF GREEN

TOYOTA UPS ITS GAME BY PLAYING THE GREEN CARD LIKE NEVER BEFORE. ITS FLAGSHIP - THE CAMRY - NOW COMES IN A HYBRID AVTAAR. WE DRIVE IT TO FIND OUT IF TOYOTA HAS PLAYED ITS CARDS RIGHT.

words: Ameya Nafik photography: Ashish Jha





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## 78 Driven

I grew up reading about superheroes like Batman, Superman and Iron Man ridding the world (America to be precise) of evildoers and coming home, at the end of a day of crime fighting, tired but happy. Obviously, like most men, I didn't exactly outgrow this fascination with superheroes. So, a couple of days ago, I watched three movies back-to-back – *Iron Man 2*, *The Dark Knight* and *Superman Returns*. Naturally, my mother didn't appreciate a grown man watching 'such nonsense,' but it's the perspective that matters.

Let's begin with Superman. He was from another planet, he used the sun for power, and he flew with zero emissions. Iron Man, on the other hand, was about the transformation of a man who owned a 'weapons of mass destruction' company into a man who built an armoured suit in a cave to fight against the Frankenstein he brought to life. I doubt he cared much about the environment.

Finally, we come to Bruce Wayne, a.k.a. Batman. He comes the closest to being real. No mutations, pure power, and a human side! In my opinion, a mixture of good and bad – a Hybrid.

When it comes to the automotive world, though, the term hybrid is always good, and who else but Toyota knows this best. Toyota's journey with the hybrid car began with the Prius in 1993, and there's been no looking back since.

So, now, Toyota has got its own 'Batman' – the Camry Hybrid, and they called us down to Bangalore to introduce the company's first hybrid car that will actually be assembled in India. According to company officials who led us through a very organised and thorough presentation, Toyota Kirloskar Motors wants this hybrid to become the 'Local Lexus.'

If you've driven the Prius, and think that the Camry will be a similar car to drive, well, you're on the wrong track. The Camry is an altogether different species, though it has its origins in the Prius.

To begin with, Toyota has changed the face of the Camry for people to easily identify between a regular one and the hybrid. Changes include a new bumper with a wider air dam, restyled fog lamps with chrome inserts, and, of course, the obvious proliferations of blue badges that help identify it as a hybrid.

But the biggest change happens to be on the inside. Just like the standard Camry, this one gets Toyota's DOHC VVT-i 2.5-litre petrol unit, but it's tweaked to accommodate the electric motor. As I said earlier, there are similarities between this power unit and

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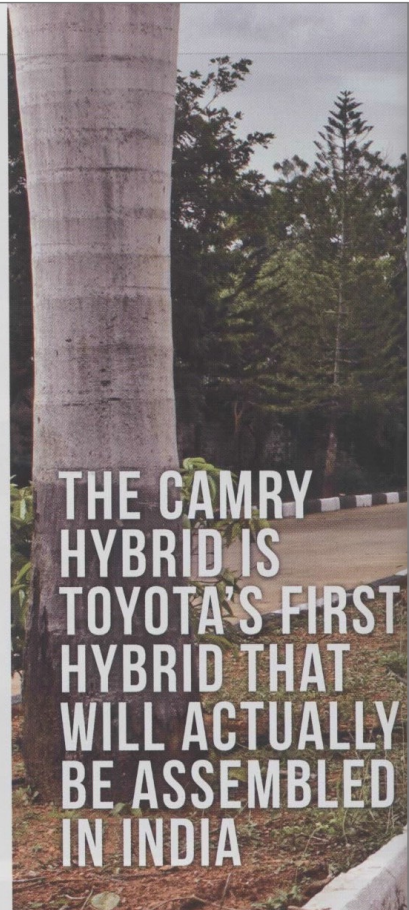
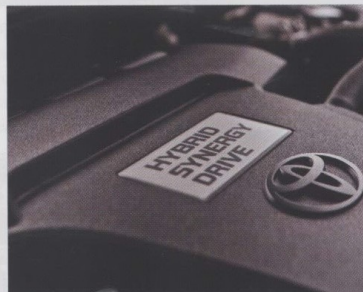
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## Driven

the Prius, but the Camry gets a sniff of more power. The output tally of the hybrid system stands at 202bhp – 158bhp from the petrol motor, and 44bhp from the electric motor. The power split device helps to deliver seamless power to the wheels, and also to the generator that keeps on charging the battery. The battery is nickel metal hydride, unlike the usual lithium-ion, and is placed under a plastic cover inside the boot.

All that being said, I was eager to get behind the wheel of the Camry and take it out for a spin. There are three driving modes to choose from – EV, Eco and Normal. The EV mode is majorly used if you're stuck in traffic, as it doesn't allow you to go above 40km/h, so it's not so much fun beyond a point. Naturally, I switched to Eco mode where the electric motor and the petrol engine work hand-in-hand with one another, and the hybrid systems jigsaw is solved. The result is that you're immediately transported into an evolved and refined driving experience, not to mention an efficient one.

The e-CVT (electronically continuously variable transmission), which the engine is mated to, takes a bit of time to push itself off the starting line – but, at the end of the day, as the revs build up, smoothness and refinement simply ooze out of this machine. But, it isn't



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Toyota Camry Hybrid

until you switch to 'Normal' mode that you fully understand what this 2.5 litre engine is capable of. The torquey petrol engine takes off its gloves and provides immense energy, which truly builds your excitement levels.

But, it's not all about the engine. Inside, Toyota has generously provided features that make it an ideal chauffeur-driven car. The three-zone climate control for the driver, front passenger, and rear passengers, cooled front seats, cruise control, powered rear seats that recline, and a rear armrest that houses the controls for the recline functions, all find their way inside the car. The sunblind for the rear windscreen and manual shades for the rear occupants add to the comfort of the people seated there.

Still not impressed? Well, the ride quality will ensure that you are. Even with the additional weight in the boot (of the battery), it's beautifully sorted when it comes to the suspension setup – and Toyota's claims of testing the Camry in local conditions for 10,000 kilometers starts making sense.

Efficiency wise, Toyota claims that the Camry Hybrid delivers 19.6km/l (ARAI figures), which is truly impressive for a car of this size. But what is exceptional here is that Toyota has managed to break all the barriers, and come out with a car that is smooth, luxurious, and possibly affordable (since it will be assembled here).

This is a start of a revolution, a green one led yet again by Toyota. This one's got Batman written all over it! 

**TOYOTA CAMRY HYBRID**

**ENGINE:** 2,494CC / IN-LINE 4 CYLINDER / 16 VALVE DOHC / 244.8V NICKEL-METAL HYDRIDE BATTERY  
**FUEL:** PETROL  
**TRANSMISSION:** E-CVT (ELECTRONICALLY-CONTROLLED CONTINUOUSLY VARIABLE TRANSMISSION)  
**POWER:** 202BHP (158BHP PETROL & 44BHP ELECTRIC)  
**TORQUE:** 213NM @ 4500RPM (PETROL ENGINE) + 270NM (ELECTRIC MOTOR)

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