

# MY TEAMMATES BELIEVE IN ME



Kirti Balani, a Magna senior research engineer working on advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS) at the Magna Electronics Division in Pune, India, draws encouragement and inspiration from her colleagues.

When Balani recently shared one of her poems entitled “Gratitude” with the Magna Women’s eXchange group, she was touched by the virtual reaction. The uplifting poem is about the COVID-19 pandemic and how its challenges can be overcome through togetherness.

“The applause I got was overwhelming,” said Balani, who joined Magna in 2019.

She added: “Magna is a good place for someone like me, who believes imagination and innovation are important. Without imagination, who could dream of something like a driverless car? My Magna assignments give my brain a kick-start. Plus, my teammates believe in me. They trust me. That belief keeps me inspired.”



Balani, who holds four patents related to vehicle automation, knew from an early age that engineering was her career path. Her father bought her an electronic robot when she was 10. It broke and she tried – unsuccessfully – to fix it.

“From that point, I had an interest in electronics and engineering,” Balani said. “I also received top marks in math and science. My friends would come over so I could teach them math.”

An early ally was her mother, Neetu, who encouraged her daughters to be among the first generation of women in their hometown to work outside the home.

“In my culture, when a girl reaches 24, she has an arranged marriage and doesn’t work,” Balani explained. “It was a big struggle for me and my sister. My mother supported us and wanted us to get our degrees. She went against many people in our community who asked, ‘Why do you want your girls to get so much education?’”

Balani earned a Master of Technology degree from the Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani, in India. Her degree included work on autonomous lawn mowers using lasers, ultrasonic sensors and cameras. At Magna, she’s working on software that improves the efficiency of ADAS features, including traffic jam assist and automatic emergency braking.



In addition to poetry, Balani cooks and dabbles in painting and digital art. One recent painting showed a woman waiting for her husband as her parents arrange a marriage. In some respects, it’s a self-portrait, since Balani said she is honoring that part of her upbringing and waiting for her parents to help her choose a mate.

In the meantime, Balani is an ally to the next generation of Indian women. Her 2-year-old niece, Neeva, now has Balani’s childhood robot and appears to be fascinated by it.

“I’m not sure what she will head towards, career-wise,” Balani said.

But her aunt’s influence will likely include encouraging Neeva’s imagination and innovative spirit.

GRATITUDE



The heart is stunned in such a way  
A little stopped, bit shattered in a way

All one can think of is a blessing  
Destination is now getting grey & fogging

So far it was just the number in news  
Today counting the relatives in hospice beds

Oh Mind, why are you getting tired?  
Soul, Why do you become helpless?

Coz some lines are busy, some switched off  
And the rest say medicine is out of stock

Everyone is wrong if seen like  
No-one is wrong if thought in a way

Be thankful be grateful  
Have patience just some patience  
It's just the Time, it shall pass,  
We all are together right?



Some of **Kirti Balani's** digital art

