

Cross-country cycling for a cause, without a pause

By Shyam Yadagiri | Published: 03rd August 2016 04:12 AM Last Updated: 03rd August 2016 04:20 AM

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HYDERABAD: In a perfect marriage of passion and luck, when cycling enthusiasts Prisiliya Madan (22) and Sumeet Paringe (26) both from Mumbai met with the team that conceived of Godrej's bamboo-framed bicycles, the idea of cycling from Kanyakumari to Khardung La pass was born.

The passion to cycle was there since our school days, they say in unison, speaking in the city after completing over 1,400 km of their journey, and would be leaving for Bhopal on Wednesday.

"I had read about Prisiliya's solo trip from Panvel to Kanyakumari, and invited her for a chat. That was how the idea was born. The design has been done by Craig Calfee, an expert. The tensile strength of bamboo is equivalent to steel. Bamboo is bio-degradable unlike steel. Our research centre in Pune has successfully developed in-house bamboo treatment facilities. Moreover, a bamboo-framed bicycle can be used in all kinds of terrains, and is well-suited for Indian roads. Godrej received the Golden Peacock eco-Innovation award in 2015," said Akash Ujawane, marketing manager at Godrej.

Over Rs 12.8 lakh have been pooled in thus far, against a target of Rs 50 lakh, by the crowdfunding platform 'Fuel A Dream' to be used for sponsoring girl child's education via IIMPACT, a non-government organisation (NGO) founded in 2003 by IIM-A alumni. Godrej has taken the responsibility of arranging the bamboo bicycles, arranging logistics, providing accommodation, and other kinds of support to the two young enthusiasts.

Prisiliya cycled solo from Panvel to Kanyakumari, a 1,800 km ride, taking inspiration from her father, who is also a cyclist. Speaking on her experiences during her solo trip, she said, "People are helpful and protective when they see a lone girl cycling. They offered me chai, samosas, juice along the way. I did not encounter any bad experience". Prisiliya had done her Masters in Computer Science and Sumeet completed Instrumentation engineering.

Speaking on the current leg of the tour, Sumeet says people asked him where he is from, what he is doing, why, etc. and also on the bike, such as its make, cost, etc. But there was some difficulty in communicating with people due to language barrier, he says, adding they rode a distance of 90-100 km per day.

"I despised the 9 to 5 lifestyle. I wanted to pursue my passion. Riding a bicycle is different from driving a car. Initially, my mother was concerned about me, but now, she is beginning to understand what moves me," says Sumeet. Living in the moment, and motivating oneself no matter the difficulties being faced is important, say Prisiliya and Sumeet, before signing off.