


Two cyclists passing through the city talk about cycling across India in 70 days.



 Sumeet Paringe and Prisiliya Madan

Friends Prisiliya Madan and Sumeet Paringe, 22 and 26, who have shared a passion for riding since school days, are now on a mission to tread the entire length of the country — 4,400 km — on bamboo bicycles.

Starting from Kanyakumari, the duo who are currently in the city, plan to ride up to the Khardung La Pass, the highest motorable road in the country, in just 70 days.

“To us, cycling comes as naturally as walking,” says Sumeet, who adds that it all started when as children, they would go on short rides. This time though, their longest cycle ride will be for a cause — to spread awareness and raise funds for educating girls.

Prisiliya believes that every girl should have adequate opportunities. So during their journey, they will speak to the locals about the importance of educating girl children. “The only problem we face is the language. A lot of people are attracted by our biodegradable cycles and come to talk to us. But we are not able to communicate with them properly,” she says.

The duo rides for at least 10 to 12 hours a day and takes inspiration from Prisiliya’s father, who, at the age of 57, rides long distances all over the world. The duo memorise the route and hardly depend on GPS.

About the challenges on the way, Sumeet says, “When we were in Mumbai, it was raining cats and dogs, so we geared up accordingly. But once we started from Kanyakumari, the heat was scorching and strong winds made it harder to move forward,” says a heavily tanned Sumeet, adding that the vehicles on highways don’t give way to cyclists.

The ride is only going to get more challenging as they reach higher altitudes, and Sumeet says both their parents are quite concerned. “But as I have been riding since a very young age, they have understood that they must accept what I do.”

Prisiliya agrees, “Even though my father is into cycling and trekking, he knows that it is quite dangerous. So, I keep calling them three to four times a day, to inform him that we are okay.”

Despite all the challenges, the task-masters have already had many enriching experiences. “We realised how kind the people of India are. Once, we were in a small village, looking for a place to eat. We saw a garage there and asked the owner for a place where we could get something to eat. There were no restaurants within 15 km so he took us to his home and fed us,” remembers Sumeet.

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