

Peddalling for a cleaner, greener city

For better eco and fuel conservation, a group of cyclists from Thane and Mulund takes to the road

Deepa H Sarna & Deepti Acharya

In an effort to bring down the impact of global warming in the twin cities of Thane and Mulund, a group of cyclists from both the places have switched to cycling. Known as Lake City Peddlers, what was initiated in March, 2008, is today a continued effort with 20 cyclists cycling for about 25 kms to promote environment conservation.

Surprisingly, cyclists from this group were never passionate about cycling. "This idea of bringing together cyclists from the city came to me from my customers to whom I sold cycles.

Though it is a small contribution to protect the environment, but it is worth the effort," says Jose George, 42, a Thane resident and a marine engineer with the merchant navy. He had opened a cycle store in Thane two years ago after which he took a break from his work. "Being in Thane is an advantage for cyclists from this city. Of course, we have better roads and trails spots which make cycling interesting," he said.

Ghodbunder Road and Yeoor jungle are two areas where these cyclists like to go quite often. "The credit goes to T Chandrasekhar, former Thane municipal commissioner, because of whom we have a wide road along with service road."

"Cycling here is fun. According to me, more people should take up cycling for a better Thane and I guess this would happen soon," said Renny Varghese, 24, another cyclist from Thane and an architect by profession.

"It hurts to see the traffic chaos and all sorts



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of pollution engulfing us. I am trying to contribute, in my capacity, to create a better tomorrow, at least a better Mulund," says Yagnesh Katira, 19, from Mulund. He has been promoting the use of cycle for covering short distances. Yagnesh, who was born and bought up in Mulund, started an initiative called Cycle-e-Thon since 2006 with a three-pronged objective. He says, "The objective of the initiative is to promote using cycle for short-distance travel that will reduce parking and pollution woes." Also, this would result in fuel conservation.

Yagnesh is a SYBCom student of VG Vaze College in Mulund. He has been supportive of a separate cycling track in Mulund for which he held a signature campaign last year. Under the banner of Cycle-e-Thon initiative, he has held several cycling sessions for school students and youngsters. Talking about Mulund, Yagnesh said, "I wish Mulund gets the first cycling track."

Men come and go, but thoughts remain forever

Physical constraints haven't held back Omkar Joshi from pursuing his dream

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Deepti Acharya

It takes one by surprise to see 30-year-old Omkar Joshi who is hearing and speech impaired busy working on his computer and directing his team of youngsters. Omkar is the founder of 'Omkar frame library of inspirational and motivational thoughts', a unique concept library in Thane that's been operational since 2005. 'Omkar - a deaf and mute project' which started as an experimental venture has turned Omkar into an entrepreneur selling influential quotes, touching thoughts, motivational statements to over more than 700 clients across Mumbai, Thane and Pune. For this lad with a never-say-die attitude, the library is a result of hard work, perseverance and honesty for over a decade now.

Omkar was enrolled in a special school at the age of two. He left school at the age of 15 as he wanted to pursue his creative instincts. Ramesh, Omkar's father, recalls, "One day, Omkar was sitting idle when I asked

him to type a text from his textbook on the computer. He typed the entire book in a couple of hours with hardly any mistakes and without prior experience. I realised that it was his strength and could be developed."

Ramesh is an avid reader and would jot down quotes, thoughts, motivating statements. Later the idea of circulating a library of thoughts and quotes emerged in 2000. "Initially it was tough. Meeting people, presenting his ideas and learning nuances were all so tough, but he learnt things well," says Ramesh. In 2005, the library was formally launched and he was joined by some 10 deaf and mute youngsters who helped him in his work. Over a period of some years, his collection of thoughts has reached nearly 10,000. Ramesh says, "We plan to segregate the collection subject-wise to cater to the clients."

Omkar is married and his wife also helps him in his venture.

a_deepti@dnaindia.net

Tip Top's route to success is so sweet

One of Thane's oldest shops, Tip-Top Mithaiwala, which began small, now offers many different sweet varieties

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Deepa H Sarna

Tip-Top Mithaiwala, in the past 18 years in Thane, has created its own identity by opening a chain of mithai shops across the city. "I owe my success to Thanekars who have loved the sweets I sell," said Rohit Shah, proprietor of the shop.

"I remember the day when we had opened a small shop along Gokhale Road with just handful of varieties. Now, I can proudly say that I have 10 shops in Thane city," says Shah. These shops are located in station area, Gokhale Road, LBS Road, Vasant Vihar, among other areas. Some of

the sweets that this shops offers are *Kaju Katri*, *Anjeer barfi*, *Kaju rolls* and Bengali sweets. While in farsan, you would get anything from *ghatia* to *khakhra*, *khari*, toast and even cakes.

"We believe in serving quality products at reasonable rates. Quality is top-most on our mind," adds Shah, who has plans to open outlets in other cities in Thane district. Moving from sweets and farsan, Shah also came up with the concept of unlimited thali in the city. This is offered at the Tip-Top Plaza Hotel along LBS Road.

deepa_s@dnaindia.net

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