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Wheels does it!

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ASHISH KOTHARI

Although cycling is the cheapest mode of travel, not many people opt for it. Why? The major reason could be the danger of being hit by a wayward motorist!

Do you know what the best vehicle ever invented is? The bicycle! And why is that so?

First, like us, it's got two legs ...ok, wheels. Second, like us, it runs on human energy ...not on expensive, polluting fossil fuels like petrol. Third, it is the cheapest (except perhaps skateboards ...and of course, walking!), and therefore affordable. Fourth, it keeps you fit. Fifth, and this is the one I like best, it can weave its way through the heaviest of traffic! In fact, in many of our crowded cities, it may be even one of the fastest ways of getting around. I cycle regularly to office, the seven to eight kilometres taking about 20 to 25 minutes.

An option?

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So why don't many more of us cycle? I guess there could be many reasons. Laziness? The thought of arriving in school or office all sweaty? But no, the more serious reasons for not cycling are that it is simply not convenient or safe. Our cities are not cycle-friendly; there are no cycle tracks, there is always the danger of being hit by a wayward motorist or bus. And a cyclist is also breathing in much more of the air pollution.

None of these is insurmountable problem! In many countries, cyclists have forced governments to put in cycle tracks; in some cities, motorists have to stop to allow cyclists to pass. In Paris, there are free cycles available at conveniently located stations, you can pick one up, pedal to wherever you want to go, and leave it at the nearest station...without any cost! In India, Pune is considering a similar programme, and its Municipal Commissioner has promised to introduce cycle tracks across the city.

*In collaboration with Kalpavriksh Environmental Action Group***What can you do?**

Do you cycle to school? If you think it's not safe, could you request the school authorities to ask the local administration to provide cycle tracks? Even if that's not possible, make sure you cycle to wherever you wish to go within three to four km.

If you're already doing this, try to form a students' cycling group, it will make your actions and voice stronger.

And if you are not doing any of the above, I bet I know what you are going to do now... ask for a cycle, and start today!

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