

# Cycling as a Sustainable Mode of Transport:

## An Enquiry into the Cycling Culture in Hyderabad



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My passion for cycling had prompted me to take up a research project on bicycling culture in the city of Hyderabad, where a renewed interest in cycling has been visible since the past few years. The objective of the project was to understand the role of urban planning, infrastructure and governance in facilitating cycling as a sustainable mode of transport. The methodology was qualitative, relying on semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with diverse group of stakeholders (cyclists, traffic policemen, bicycle dealers). Additionally I chose to do a case study of The Atlanta Foundation(TAF), an organisation engaged in promoting a culture of cycling in Hyderabad.

My analysis provided a rich understanding of trends of cycling in Hyderabad and also on the duration and motivation for bicycle use by different categories of users including information technology (IT) employees and wage labourers. The city has a vibrant cycling culture with many cycling communities and bicycle stores. Many IT employees cycle all the way to their offices and some of them cycle for long distances on weekends. Traffic policemen report more cyclists on the roads during the weekends. Labourers however cannot afford the public transport system and have to commute by cycle every day. Sales of adult bicycles have also increased like never before as reported by cycle dealers in the city.

Some of the noteworthy initiatives to promote cycling in Hyderabad include Redibike- India's largest cycle sharing programme launched in 2016 by Dr. Reddy's Laboratories limited and Cykul in collaboration with the Telangana State Government. TAF conducts annual events such as Freedom Ride, Republic Ride and Peace Ride whose collective participation has increased almost hundred fold in 2015 from its first edition in 2009. While such initiatives have increasingly brought out a positive change in attitude of citizens toward cycling as a safe and sustainable transport means in Hyderabad, the study also

highlights the need of infrastructural measures including segregated cycling tracks, or shared bus and cycle lanes where space is scarce and financial incentives such as tax benefits or free insurance for regular cyclists. Planting shade trees on roads as well as extending the reach of cycle sharing programmes would also encourage people to use cycles.