



THE MEMBERS OF INDIA

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Around the world on human power alone

Anahita Mukherji | TNN

Mumbai: A pedal-boat, a bicycle, a kayak and roller blades. That's all Jason Lewis, a 39-year-old British adventure-seeker used to circumnavigate the globe. Lewis has made globe-trotting a full-time occupation for the last 13 years. TOI caught up with him while on his latest destination—Mumbai.

In 1994, at the age of 26, Lewis, a musician in the UK, signed up for Expedition 360, a journey that his college friend Steve Smith had come up with. In order to circumnavigate the globe using human power alone—no sails and no motor boats. The expedition, which was supposed to last two-and-a-half years turned into a "monster of a project", earning the duo three Guinness records between the two of them.

Lewis and Smith bicycled all the way from England to Portugal, from where they began their adventure with Moksha, a pedal-boat that they rode all the way across to



Jason Lewis in Mumbai

Miami. The journey took 111 days, without a single stopover. "We named the boat Moksha as it symbolised a voyage of self-discovery for us. We read a lot of scriptures, including the Bhagavad Gita, before beginning the journey," he said.

Although they stored food supplies in the boat, there was no space for water, so they carried a desalinator to convert sea-water into potable water. "Close to the end of our journey we were down on supplies and managed on half rations. We even caught a few fish ourselves," said Lewis.

The duo travelled from Miami to San Francisco—Lewis on roller blades and Smith on bicycle. In Colorado, Lewis was run over by a car, broke both his legs and spent nine months recovering from the accident. They spent a year in San Francisco working off their debts and raising money for the next leg of the journey.

► Boat has names of 3,800 helpers, P 4

Lewis's boat has names of 3,800 well-wishers

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Mumbai: British adventurer Jason Lewis and his friend Steve Smith stayed in San Francisco for a year raising money for their around-the-world journeys.

It took three attempts to pedal the boat off the coast of San Francisco from where they were headed for Australia. They stopped over at Hawaii, where Smith left the expedition. Lewis decided to continue the voyage solo to Australia, where he had some incredible adventures en route.

"While pedalling across the Pacific from North America to Australia I was confronted with the 'doldrums', a stretch of counter-currents where you end up pedalling against the current," said Lewis. No matter how hard he tried to cross the stretch, for three weeks he found that he was pedalling on the spot.

That's when he let go of the reins, realising that there was just so much that the human body could achieve.

A day later, a breath of fresh wind came from nowhere and created a micro-environment for him, pushing him gently across the counter-current. "Sometimes, when one tries very hard to achieve something but consistently fails to do so, one has to submit to a higher power," he says.

After biking across Australia with a bunch of teenagers and kayaking from Australia to Singapore, he rode a bicycle all the way from Singapore through China, Tibet and Nepal into India and finally reached

Mumbai last month. Despite Lewis and Smith's three Guinness records for circumnavigating the world using human power, they haven't managed to attract any sponsorship. Although they sent out hundreds of letters inviting sponsorships before leaving England, they got not replies.

They raised money displaying the boat at boat shows in Miami and shopping centres in Australia, selling merchandise on their website and working to pay off debts, said Lewis.

There are a lot of individuals who contributed to the journey. Their names can be found painted on the boat. The number of names, at last count, was 3,800.

Besides the quest for adventure and the passion for travel, Lewis stuck it out because of his love for education.

He has visited 860 schools across the globe, and has devised a curriculum to make education more fun for children with the help of teachers around the world in the geographical regions he has visited.

He has spoken to kids about his adventures and has even lent out cameras to youngsters who have shot their own short films.

The journey, exciting though it is, has taken its toll on Lewis, who has completely worn out one knee and misses the sense of community that comes with spending more time with people. Is he ready to call it quits? Not just yet. He now plans to set out for Africa.