

CHAPTER: - 13

TOPIC: - WHERE THERE IS A WHEEL

P. SAINATH

SUMMARY

Where There is a Will by P. Sainath highlights how there is a huge revolution that very easily happens in Pudukkottai, a small District in Tamil Nadu. It is a very rare & unique opportunity when women, especially not very literate become the cause of change.

In Pudukkottai women started learning bicycling as a means of freedom. This carried out to be chain reaction when women felt that trying to make people around them also enjoy independence was the reason why women were taught cycling free of cost and voluntarily. Women who had learned cycling and had the ability to train the others were called master trainers and they would try to train the others. Fortunately, all those women who joined the literate movement were diverted towards the new cyclist movement thereby, twin advantages were in their favor. Women who joined the neo-cyclist movement were drawn towards the neo-literate movement which meant that people, especially women were able to gain a lot of freedom and also oppose the male domination.

There were occasions when women used cycles for multitasking, i.e., especially so when women tried to purchase gents cycle and they used the front carrier to seat children, first their produce on the carrier and hang pots of water behind. Doing so, they were able to:

1. Reduce their dependency on public transport.
2. Sell more goods
3. Take care of their children
4. Save time and money for their comfort.

Initially, when this movement started, there were many men who opposed it, it was then that the Arivoli Iyakkam movement (light of knowledge) began and many volunteers of this movement would attack men and warn them when they made nasty remarks. Added to this, the movement had one volunteer called Muthu Bhaskaran who had written an anthem song that was sung by these and this further united their struggle.

DC Sheela Rani Chunkath moved the banks to provide loans for all those women who wanted to purchase bicycles.

This further strengthened the women and instilled a lot of confidence in them. One of them tries to describe the journey on her bicycle equivalent to a plane journey because they were never exposed to any technological development.

The narrator P. Sainath who returns to Pudukkottai after some time realizes how that revolution and the same attitude still existed in Pudukkottai and the same description is seen in the postscript written by him.

I. Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase or a sentence each: -

1. Where did the cycling movement start?

Ans: Pudukkottai

2. When did the cycling movement start?

Ans: In 1991

3. What does bicycling symbolize for most of the neo literate women?

Or

What does bicycle represent for the rural women in Pudukkottai?

Or

What does the bicycle represent for the rural women?

March - 2020

Ans: A symbol of independence, freedom and mobility.

4. What does 'Arivoli Iyakkam' mean?

Ans: Light of knowledge movement.

5. What does cycling movement offer to the women in Pudukkottai?

Ans: A way out of enforced routines, around male imposed barriers.

6. Who was the brain behind the cycling movement?

Ans: Sheela Rani Chunkath the former District Collector.

7. Which international agency sanctioned fifty mopeds for Arivoli women activists?

Ans: UNICEF

8. Why did some women in Pudukkottai prefer the gents' cycle?

Ans: Because these have an additional bar from the seat to the handle.

9. Who wrote the famous cycling song that has become the anthem of the cycling movement?

Or

Who wrote the famous cycling song in Pudukkottai district of Tamil Nadu?

Ans: Muthu Bhaskaran, an Arivoli activist.

10. What gave freedom to the women of Pudukkottai in Tamil Nadu?

Ans: Cycling.

11. What did UNICEF give the Arivoli women activists of Pudukkottai?

Ans: Fifty mopeds.

12. Why couldn't the rural women of Pudukkottai go by bus to other villages? Give any one reason.

Ans: Because buses were not frequent/poorly connected routes/could not afford it.

13. Name the owner of Ram cycles, a bicycle dealer in Pudukkottai.

Ans: S. Kannakarajan.

14. How many female cyclists participated in the all-women's rally in 'Where There is a Wheel'?

Ans: More than 1500.

15. Who is the central coordinator of Arivoli?

Or

Who was the central coordinator of the Arivoli Iyakkam?

Or

Who was the central coordinator of the cycling movement in 'Where there is a wheel'? **March – 2018**

Ans: N. Kannammal.

16. Which of the vehicles is called 'Humble' in 'Where there is a wheel'? **March – 2016**

Ans: Bicycle / Cycle.

17. Why did some women prefer 'Gents' cycle?

March – 2017

Ans: Because they could seat a child on the additional bar / Shortage of ladies' cycle.

18. What had stunned the inhabitants of Pudukkottai on the International Women's day? **March – 2019**

Ans: All women's cycle rally in which over 1,500 female cyclist participated.

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph of 80 – 100 words each:

III. Answer the following questions in about 200 words:

1. Describe the Arivoli Iyakkam, Light of Knowledge Movement, from the lesson Where There is a Wheel',

Ans: Pudukkottai district in Tamil Nadu is known for its vigorous literacy drive called Arivoli Iyakkam. To spread the message of education, the cycling movement was started by Arivoli. A large number of women learnt to ride bicycles here, Cycling became a symbol of social mobility. In rural Pudukkottai, young women who had just become literates, moved fast on bicycles on the roads. The increasing number of women cyclists indicates progress of society. Cycling was liberating and gave the women freedom and confidence to move on their own. So women learning to ride bicycles has become a significant part of the literacy movement.

2. How does cycling help the women of Pudukkottai for economic gains?

Ans: In his essay 'Where There is a Wheel', P. Sainath describes the optimism that cycling has brought about in the lives of women of Pudukkottai, a poor district of Tamil Nadu. The district's literacy drive known as Arivoli Iyakkam, encourages women to learn cycling, they conduct cycle training camps. Cycling has given them confidence along with mobility. It increases the income of the rural women. Women sell agricultural products not only to their village people but also to the people of other villages. They don't need to wait for buses which are not frequent. Cycling saves time. They don't need to walk long distances. They finish their work easily and quickly. They carry their

children, the produce and two pots of water on their bicycles, thus, combining their difficult tasks.

3. Why does Palagummi Sainath state that Pudukkottai in Tamil Nadu remains unique among the India districts?

Ans: In his essay 'Where There is a Wheel', P. Sainath shares his observation that changes had taken place in the poor district of Tamil Nadu known as Pudukkottai. The rural women have chosen cycling as a medium. They have learnt cycling which has given them confidence, freedom and above all mobility. Arivoli Iyakkam, the literacy drive has made the best use of this skill. Young girls could continue their studies and women could move around without depending upon the male members of their families. They have started selling their agricultural products carrying them on their cycles. There was a passion among the women to learn cycling. Former District Collector Sheela Rani Chankath encouraged women to take loans from banks to buy cycles. Arivoli activist conducted training camps to teach cycling to women. Thus, this humble vehicle made Pudukkottai a unique district and an inspirational example for others.

4. List the activities taken up by Arivoli, to empower women through cycling.

Ans: Cycling is a social movement at Pudukkottai, a poor district in Tamil Nadu. It has given a new life to many rural women. Cycling is a symbol of independence, freedom and mobility. It is supported by the district's literacy drive, led by Arivoli. It was the brain child of popular district collector, Sheela Rani Chankath. The main intention behind this was to spread literacy among the rural women. As a part of this, she pushed banks to sanction loans for women to buy bicycles. Arivoli has master-trainers who train the interested activists and it conducts exhibition-cum-contests. In 1992, more than 70,000 women displayed their cycling skills at the public exhibition run by Arivoli. Being impressed, UNICEF sanctioned fifty mopeds for Arivoli women activists. Arivoli training camps also train a number of prospective learners. The neo-literates and the neo-cyclists even sing songs that encourage bicycling.

5. Cycling as a movement has brought about a radical change in Pudukkottai. Explain.

Or

How has cycling benefitted the rural women of Pudukkottai?

Or

How has cycle transformed the lives of many women in Pudukkottai? **March – 2019**

Ans: Pudukkottai, one of the poorest districts of Tamil Nadu, is a witness to a radical change, as the rural women, especially the neo-literates have taken to cycling. It has become a symbol of independence, freedom and mobility to them. Women agricultural workers, quarry laborers, teachers, all have made cycling a passion. They proudly admit that their confidence has boosted and their dependency on men has reduced. The bicycle even allows them to multitask. One can come across women carting

provisions, fetching water and even selling their produce, sometimes with their children on their bicycles. Though it does not boost their economy directly, it does help them to earn more as they can cover longer distances. So, invariably cycling has changed the lives of women of Pudukkottai.

6. On the basis of your reading of 'Wheel Brings Progress', can you say that cycling has proved itself a social movement in Pudukkottai.

Ans: Yes, cycling is seen as a social movement in Pudukkottai, Tamil Nadu. In 18 months over 1,00,000 rural women, most of them neo-literates, took to bicycling as a symbol of independence, freedom and mobility. The cycling movement has given women the confidence. It has reduced their dependence on men. Women saw a direct link between cycling and their personal freedom. Women can do many things on their own without expecting help from men. But Arivoli movement gave cycling social sanction. When women learnt cycling, they didn't need to depend on men of the family for moving about. Sheela Rani Chunkath, former district collector, encouraged women to learn cycling for mobility.

7. Justify the statement 'Wheel brings progress' with reference to 'Where There is a Wheel'. March – 2015

Ans: Cycling has enabled rural women to be independent, free and mobile. The productivity of these rural women has increased due to this new independence. Women no longer have to walk long distances to fetch water or to sell their products or to bring provision. She no longer has to depend on public transport, so the time saved can be utilized for other purposes like cooking and guiding children in their studies. It has reduced fatigue. It has increased rural women's income by giving the women freedom to sell more their products in and around other villages. It has increased their leisure time. So that she can take adequate rest. It has contributed to their self-respect which is vital.

Women agricultural, laborers, quarry laborers, village health nurses, Balwadi and Anganwadi workers, gem cutters and school teachers, gram sevika and mid-day meal workers and school and college students have benefitted by cycling.

Neo-literates and Neo-cyclist women have a direct link between cycling and their personal independence. P. Sainath describes the feelings of rural women who have learnt 'cycling'. They feel a new kind of independence, freedom and mobility has come to their monotonous lives. It has given them confidence and reduced their dependence on men. Cycling has offered a way out of enforced routines, around male-imposed barriers.

8. What benefits, according to P. Sainath, has cycling brought into the lives of rural women? March – 2016

Ans: According to R. Sainath, the introduction of cycling for women in Pudukkottai district has brought about a tremendous change in the lives of the rural women. Cycling has empowered women agricultural worker's village health nurses, Balwadi and anganwadi workers, gem cutters, Grama Sevikas and school teachers, both economically and

politically. Earlier, some of the women who used to sell agricultural or other produce within a group of villages had to commute by bus. For them, now the bicycle cuts down on time, earlier wasted in waiting for buses.

Secondly, it gives them much more time to focus on selling their produce. Earlier, they had to rush back early to tend to the children and perform other chores like fetching water etc. Now, these women can combine different tasks with non-challenge. Similarly, quarry workers had to go too far off places because their work places were cut off from the main areas. Now, by learning cycling they have become mobile. Women can now collect water as well as cart provisions from other places on their own.

9. Comment on how cycling reduced women's dependence on men with reference to 'Where there is a wheel'. March – 2017

Ans: Tens of thousands of neo-literate rural women in Pudukkottai district have discovered a new way of overcoming their backwardness, of asserting themselves by learning to ride a bicycle. This simple and humble vehicle has done wonders in their lives. It has empowered women by giving them mobility and the opportunity to spread their wings. Knowing how to ride a bicycle made these women self-confident, reduced their dependence on men, and helped them to break the social barriers imposed on them by a male-dominated society. It helped to boost their income as these women could sell their products even in far-flung areas, they saved time wasted in waiting for buses, they could easily do several tasks simultaneously like shopping for provisions and collecting water. They were able to save a lot of time, which they could use to take rest, spend with their children or in any manner they chose. Thus, the drudgery of their lives was considerably reduced and most importantly cycling gave them a sense of self-respect which is very important.

10. How has bicycle brought a total change in the lives of rural women as in 'Where there is a wheel'? March – 2018

Ans: Pudukkottai, one of the poorest districts of Tamil Nadu, is a witness to a radical change, as the rural women, especially the neo-literates have taken to cycling. It has become a symbol of independence, freedom and mobility to them. Women agricultural workers, quarry laborers, teachers, all have made cycling a passion. They proudly admit that their confidence has boosted and their dependency on men has reduced. The bicycle even allows them to multitask. One can come across women carting provisions, fetching water and even selling their bicycles. Though it does not boost their economy directly, it does help them to earn more as they can cover longer distances. So, invariably cycling has changed the lives of women of Pudukkottai.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER:

➤ Cycling became a social movement in Pudukkottai

- ✚ Sheela Rani Chunkath started the idea of cycling in 1991.
- ✚ She included mobility. Jameela Bibi, Fatima and Avakanni started cycling not give attention to the dirty remarks. Arivoli Iyakkam led literacy drive.
- ✚ Muthu Bhaskaran composed the cycling song Cycling is a symbol Song.
- ✚ Cycling is the symbol of Independence, freedom and Mobility.
- ✚ N. Kannammal gave the rural women confidence.
- ✚ Cycling reduced their dependence on men.
- ✚ They bring water, sell their agricultural or other products on their bicycle.
- ✚ It saves time, increases leisure time.
- ✚ It boosts income.
- ✚ It has brought the sense of self – respect
- ✚ N. Kannammal said, 'It is a Himalayan achievement'.

RECAPITULATION:

- ❖ Cycling as a movement in Pudukkottai
- ❖ Rural women's participation
- ❖ Helped to fight against poverty and dependence
- ❖ N. Kannammal- the pioneer of cycling movement
- ❖ Vicious attacks on women
- ❖ Cycling training camp at Arivoli on Sundays
- ❖ Cycling- the brainchild of Sheela Rani Chunkat
- ❖ It helped in the literacy drive
- ❖ Cycling boosted income and reduced dependence

EXERCISE:

ONE MARK

1. What has been a chosen medium for rural women of Pudukkottai?
2. Whose brainchild is the cycling movement according to P. Sainath as mentioned in 'Where There Is A Wheel'?
3. Name one of the women who have trained young women from their communal in the art of cycling.
4. In which district of Tamil Nadu, according to P. Sainath, has cycling been a social movement?
5. Name the person who wrote the famous cycling song mentioned in 'Where There Is a Wheel'?
6. Mention any one of the advantages gained due to cycling by the neo literate women of Pudukkottai district?

FOUR MARKS

1. In what different ways has cycle empowered rural women in Pudukkottai?
2. How did Sheela Rani Chunkath empower the Pudukkottai women by including cycling in the literacy drive?
3. Discuss how cycling movement has empowered the rural women of Pudukkottai
4. How does cycling empower rural women according to P. Sainath?

5. Comment on how the cycling reduced the women's dependence on men with reference to Sainath's essay.
6. 'Cycling has become a symbol of freedom'. Explain with reference to 'Where there is a wheel'?
7. How has cycling enhanced a sense of self – respect in the women of Pudukkottai?

SIX MARKS

1. 'Wheel brings progress.' Justify this statement with reference to 'Where There Is A Wheel'

'You learn something every day if you pay attention'.