

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MAKING FREE TRAVEL IN KARNATAKA-2023

Abstract

Keeping in the view of India's vision, Karnataka is one of the leading states, looking forward for implementing various policies which is emphasizing socio-economic development of the state as well as Nation. Karnataka government encouraging women's participation in economic activities of the state which improves economic progress and leads to sustainable development. Achieving change requires certain policies and programs that will improve women's access to secure livelihood. Promoting women's potential through education, skill development and employment, giving paramount importance for eliminating socio-economic barriers is possible only through laws, regulations and other appropriate measures.

Keywords: *Minorities, Mobility of Economy, Transportation, Mobility of Women, Savings.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

On 10th May 2023, Karnataka Legislative Assembly election was held, votes were counted and the result was declared on 13 May 2023. The Congress got highest votes and became the “Ruling Party” of Karnataka Government. The newly elected Congress government launched the scheme on 11 June 2023 for women to travel free in Karnataka under “Shakti Yojana”. This scheme offers free travel to women and transgender people in the government-run buses in Karnataka state. This is the first of the five poll guarantees of the Congress government who promised to provide this facility during election. This scheme have brought smile on the faces of many women’s and encouraged them to participate in many activities of the state.

II. ABOUT THE SCHEME

- Chief Minister Siddaramayya, Deputy Chief Minister D.K Shivakumar and Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy launched the scheme and issued smart cards to five beneficiaries at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru.
- The Chief Minister Siddaramayya also took the role of a bus conductor and issued “ZERO FAIR” tickets to women passengers at the Kempegowda Bus Station in Bengaluru.
- Siddaramayya said, the free bus travel will benefit the minorities, women and deprived classes and hoped that the move will boost women’s participation in the work place.
- D.K Shivakumar said, “Women are like the eyes of a family.....Women are given first priority in our culture. We have implemented this Shakti scheme as the epitome of female empowerment”.
- Transport Minister Ramalinga said, the aim is to provide easy and safe travel for women commuters while briefing people about the scheme.
- Education Minister Madhu Bangarappa said, “We are very happy that we are launching Shakti Scheme for women of all ages.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHEME

- To improve the mobility of women.
- To increase the participation of women work force in various sectors of the economy.
- Helps to bring gender equality.
- To provide financial independence of women.
- It reduces the barrier of transportation expenses and making it possible for women to search for employment opportunities and contribute to the economy.
- Enabling women easily access to improved transportation, education and healthcare facilities.
- To lessen the financial burden on women by eliminating the cost of transportation.
- Help women to save money that can be utilize for other essential needs like food, education, healthcare facilities etc.
- Helps to reduce the economic and social inequality.

IV. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA OF THE SCHEME

- Free travel facility is available only to the women who are residence of Karnataka.
- Available to women of all ages.
- Female students of Schools and Colleges can also avail this facility.
- 50% of reservation is given to men in KSRTC buses of Karnataka.

V. DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR THE SCHEME

Any Photo identity proof issued by the Government of Karnataka such as,

- Aadhaar card
- PAN card
- Voter ID
- Driving Licence
- Ration Card etc.

VI. BUSES ALLOWED TO TRAVEL UNDER SHAKTI SCHEME

- **BMTC:** (Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation).
- **KSRTC:** (Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation).
- **NWKRTC:** (North West Karnataka Road Transport Corporation).
- **KKRTC:** (Kalyana Karnataka Road Transport Corporation).

VII. BUSES EXCLUDED TO TRAVEL UNDER SHAKTI SCHEME

- Airavat
- Airavat Club Class
- Airavat Gold Class
- Ambari
- Ambari Dream Class
- Ambari Utsav
- Vayu Vajra
- Non-AC Sleeper
- Rajahamsa
- EV Power Plus
- AC buses etc.

VIII. ADVANTAGES OF THE SCHEME

- Free public transportation for women could be a Game-changer for the state's development at a massive scale.
- This scheme will help the weaker sections of the society.
- The cost which was spending on the transportation, now entering into the markets as women started spending to purchase daily requirements.
- Promote to travel for long-distance within the boundaries of Karnataka.
- Increased the number of women passengers in public transportation.
- Increases economic savings in the state.

- Women's are utilizing the free travel facility at the fullest.
- Women started visiting to their relatives houses, visiting to temples, mosques, darghas etc.
- Nagarathamma , who is working as a BMTC conductor says, ticket collections have increased after the implementation of the scheme. My collection used to Rs.3500-4000 in a shift before. Now it has increased to Rs.6000- 7000. She says that these tickets amount will be reimburse by the government.

IX. DISADVANTAGES OF THE SCHEME

- The scheme does not cover the bus services like Luxury, AC and Non- AC Sleeper buses.
- The cost burden of the government will increase and this lead to increase in the collection taxes in the state.
- Free bus fare reduces the revenue of the government.
- Due to the launch of scheme, the numbers of passengers have increased and it leads to Over-crowding in the buses.
- Over-Crowded buses can be seen the industrial areas like Peenya, where the passengers are travelling even in door steps of the buses.
- Bus conductors are facing difficulty to issue the tickets for all passengers during peak hours.
- If a bus driver notices a large group of women in the bus stops, they won't stop the bus.
- The people have to wait for another bus, till they reach to their working places it will be late, and may facing the problem of deduction in their salaries.
- School and College going students are finding it challenging to find a place in public buses.
- The demand for private bus services has declined because more women are using public transportation as it is made free for them. .
- Private bus operators who were providing additional coverage services are struggling to sustain their operations leading to route cancellation or closure of their business.
- The daily income of the Auto and can drivers may affected heavily due to implementation of Shakti scheme.
- The people who travel by Auto Rickshaw are facing the problem of paying extra amount on meter charges.
- The government have to find alternative sources of funding for reimbursement of income to the transport corporations to continue the services.
- Free travel could lead to an increase strain on the government to provide better network of bus facility.

X. CHALLENGES FACING BY BMTC CONDUCTORS

The conductors who are working in BMTC are encountered with several challenges.

- Free bus travels have increased the work load of bus conductors by increasing the number of passengers.
- BMTC conductors said, in the past it was easier as around 30% of women used to have passes. Now we have to issue zero fair tickets to all of the women. Earlier, we

used to issue 40-50 tickets to women, but now the number has increased to 80-90 tickets.

- Conductors are facing difficult to verify the Identity Cards for all as they have issue the tickets before the stage comes.
- Women's are forcing the conductors to issue Zero fair tickets even if they show Identity proof in mobile phones.

XI. CONCLUSION

The ruling party, Congress government of Karnataka have taken significant steps to encourage women by providing free travel facility to all Karnataka women irrespective of their caste, religion etc. It is happy to say that the congress government have given priority to women in many aspects like free transportation, gruha lakshmi through which women head of the family is getting 2000 rupees every month etc. This scheme is especially helpful for those who travel regularly. The people have to support this type of government who focus on various schemes which provides welfare and the development of the state as well as the country.

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