

Karnataka's Shakti Scheme: Women Reclaiming Public Spaces and Mobility

Kanakamalini M.A.

Institutional affiliation: Professor
Department of English,
Sri D.D. Urs Government First Grade College,
Hunsur, Mysuru
kanakamalini@gmail.com

Pratheeksha Gopinath

Institutional affiliation: Ph.D research scholar,
Department of Economics & Finance,
Birla Institute of Technology & Science,
BITS Pilani, Hyderabad
gopinathpratheeksha@gmail.com,
p20200023@hyderabad.bits-pilani.ac.in

Abstract

The Congress government in Karnataka implemented its flagship guarantee schemes, viz., the 'Shakti' and the 'Gruhalakshmi' schemes on the 11th of June and 18th of August 2023, respectively. The 'Shakti' scheme is the provision for free intra-state transportation in non-premium bus services of Karnataka, for women (including 'female students') belonging to all domiciles of the state. Its' beneficiaries also include females belonging to the age cohort of '6 -12 years' and 'transgenders' of all domiciles of Karnataka. The 'Gruhalakshmi' scheme offers 2000 rupees per month to every female household head of BPL (Below Poverty Line) families of Karnataka.

This paper intends to analyse the need for and impact of the 'Shakti' scheme. This is also an attempt to examine the need for the 'Gruhalakshmi' guarantee scheme. This paper analyses the socio-economic impact of the 'Shakti' scheme in the backdrop of the various critical comments received after its launch. It examines Karnataka's declining female labour force participation and the factors contributing to it. It also makes a note of the nature of women's unpaid household labour. It examines the two major factors, viz. economic dependency and economic security. It underscores the various factors obstructing the mobility of women in public places.

One of the unique aspects of this paper is its exploration of folklore in order to understand and identify the type of barriers to women's access to public spaces and mobility. The paper traces the trajectory of women's restricted presence in public spaces. It also records any such initiatives taken in other parts of India prior to the launch of the Shakti Scheme in Karnataka. It also takes note of the allegation that the scheme is just a poll freebie offered with the intention of luring

women voters. This paper analyses and puts to the fore the need for and the impact of the 'Shakti' and the 'Gruhalakshmi' schemes with a neutral and unbiased lens.

Themes: Women empowerment, Community development, Gender equality.

Key Words: Shakti Scheme; Access; Mobility; Public Space; Women Empowerment; Female labour force participation; Karnataka.

Introduction

The Congress government in Karnataka implemented its flagship scheme, the 'Shakti Scheme' on the 11th of June 2023. It is one of the five guarantee schemes assured by the Congress party in its 'poll manifesto' for the 2023 Karnataka assembly elections. This scheme is the party's promise for the provision of free intra-state transportation facilities, for the women (including 'female students') belonging to all domiciles of the state of Karnataka. The beneficiaries of the scheme also include females belonging to the age cohort of '6 -12 years' and 'transgenders' of all domiciles of Karnataka. The beneficiaries can travel free of cost in all non-luxury buses within the state. The scheme places no limit on 'within-state travel distance'.

In order to avail the benefits of the scheme, the beneficiaries need to show the proof that they are residents of the state of Karnataka. They need to procure their 'Shakti smart card' by applying through the Seva Sindhu portal. Till the time they receive their cards, they can show any of the valid identification proofs, such as the 'Aadhar card' and get 'zero-cost' bus tickets in any of the buses of KSRTC (Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation), BMTC (Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation), NKRTC (North West Karnataka Road Transport Corporation) and KKRTC (Kalyana Karnataka Road Transport Corporation).

The two main objectives of the scheme are to increase the shrinking women workforce and to strengthen the public transportation system in Karnataka. Women were seen in large numbers in bus stations, travelling to religious places after the implementation of the scheme. The day after its launch, 2.09 lakh women travelled in buses. On the second day 2.33 lakh women travelled in public transport system. The average load of 60-70 percent neared 100% in the Mysuru division itself. The load may have been the result of early excitement amongst masses. But it put a lot of pressure on the bus services.

A month after the launch of the 'Shakti scheme', another pivotal guarantee scheme, the 'Gruhalakshmi' scheme was launched by the Karnataka government on 18th of August 2023. 'Gruhalakshmi' scheme offers 2000 rupees per month to every female household head of BPL (Below Poverty Line) families, i.e. families having an annual income of less than 2 lakh rupees. The guarantee schemes received both positive reviews and critical comments after its implementation. Recently, law students of Karnataka lodged a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) case in the High Court of Karnataka, complaining about the hardships faced by the daily commuters after the launch of the Shakti scheme. They have objected to the spending of tax payers' money on guarantee schemes. While addressing the BJP functionaries, the prime Minister alleged that the guarantee schemes are launched ignoring the progress of the state.

The Shakti scheme and the other guarantees are believed to have helped the Congress Party in achieving a clear majority. The 'Shakti' scheme is alleged to be just a poll freebie. Men are complaining that the move has made women ignore their household duties and travel unnecessarily to places of faith and tourist attraction. There is also a strong criticism of the move and its impact on fuel procurement and financial matters. Some are worried about the possibility of a huge hike in travel charges affecting the male passengers. In view of these critical comments there is a need to examine whether the implementation of the Shakti scheme in the state of Karnataka is a justifiable one.

This paper intends to analyse the need for and impact of the 'Shakti' scheme. This is also an attempt to analyse the impact of the 'Gruhalakshmi' guarantee scheme by the Congress party in connection with the 'Shakti' scheme. This paper analyses the socio-economic impact of both the schemes in the backdrop of the various critical comments received after its launch. It takes note of the allegation that the scheme is just a poll freebie offered with the intention of luring women voters. The other voices of dissension expressed in media, social platforms and cases lodged in courts are also critically examined to understand the response of people.

This paper examines Karnataka's declining female labour force participation and the factors contributing to it. It also makes a note of the nature of women's unpaid household labour. It examines the two major factors, viz. economic dependency and economic security. The paper traces the trajectory of women's restricted presence in public spaces. It underscores the various factors obstructing the mobility of women in public places. One of the unique aspects of this paper is its exploration of folklore in order to understand and identify the type of barriers to women's access to public spaces and mobility. This paper highlights and acknowledges folklore as a rich repository of data. Folklore from Karnataka are discussed in relation to the topic of mobility and access. It also records any such initiative taken in other parts of India prior to the launch of the Shakti Scheme in Karnataka. This paper tries to analyse and put to the fore the socio-economic impact of the scheme with a neutral and unbiased lens.

Women's 'empowerment' and 'mobility'

In order to examine the need for women's 'empowerment' and 'mobility', one has to understand the significance and meaning of these terms. The Indian constitution upholds the principle of gender equality in its preamble, fundamental rights and duties, and directive principles. MDG 3, one of the eight 'millennium development goals', aimed to promote and achieve gender equality and women's empowerment by the year 2015. The United Nation's Sustainable development goal 5 (SDG 5) aims to empower all women and girls and achieve gender equality by the year 2030. As per Duflo (2012), empowering women is improving their ability of accessing tools for development, mainly education, health, earning opportunities and political participation. Empowering women is enabling their rights to domestic decision making, resource accessibility and freedom of movement (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005).

A review of literature (Banerjee *et al.*, 2022; Kishor and Gupta, 2009; Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007; Gupta and Yesudian, 2006) shows freedom of movement, control over resources, domestic decision making, control over earnings and spending, freedom from domestic violence and threat as some of the pivotal indicators of women empowerment. 'Mobility of women' is a huge marker of women's empowerment. It is a crucial factor that affects all other indicators of women empowerment. As per Hanson (2010), mobility refers to the day to day movement of people from one place to another. Mobility aids women's access to opportunities and allows them to challenge all-pervading patriarchal constraints. Also, it is a pivotal factor in the empowerment of women belonging to low-income households, as it enhances their access to jobs, in turn increasing their chances of fighting generational poverty (Mahadevia, 2015).

Barriers to women's access to public spaces, mobility and transportation

One of the Jnanapith awardees of Karnataka states: "Every house will have a front-yard occupied by the men. The middle is where it is a little dark and bright. Deeper inside is the kitchen occupied only by women. Further inside is the backyard with a well" (Ananthamurthy, 2012).

In order to analyse whether the Karnataka government's implementation of the Shakti scheme was a justifiable one, one has to understand the barriers to women's mobility, access to public places and transportation. Feminists have argued that 'gender' has had and will continue to have profound influence on one's 'mobility' (Hanson, 2010). If we go by the annals of women's history for tracing her presence in

public spaces, we witness a confined and restricted path full of hurdles and barriers. Women were confined to the inner most parts of the houses and their movements were restricted to the kitchens, backyards and bedrooms. Access to main roads, public spaces and front yards was rarely encouraged. Women could venture into the public spaces only as low level labourers or as devotees. Public spaces always remained patriarchal. It was said that a woman only came out of the threshold of her house twice: once after her marriage, when she left for her husband's place and the second time after her death. In certain religions, women don't have access to religious places also. Only with the establishment of schools and colleges for girls, women encountered the public world. India's first school for girls was established in Bhide Wada in Pune on 1st of January, 1848. Bethune College in Kolkata, was established as a girls' school in 1849 and as a college in 1879. Education for women was officially executed in the princely 'Mysore State' in 1881 (Sagar, 2015).

A household woman has to fulfill all her duties, make suitable arrangements for her family's management in her absence, seek approval from her husband and in-laws, beg for transportation charges and small amount of money for minor expenditures. If she has to travel long distance she should seek male escort. She cannot travel at night. She cannot take female escorts as she has to arrange for their safe transportation as well. Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation conducted a detailed study of mobility with the World Bank and identified women's safety as a key priority. The respondents of the Jagori (2010) survey on women's safety in Delhi, hailed public transport buses as hubs of women harassment. The toolkit developed by the World Bank recommends assessment of gender-dis-aggregated mobility patterns, strengthening of policies, improving infrastructure and services with women-safety measures (Kouame and Ollivier, 2023). Women restricting their movements is often due to their anxiety over victimization in public spaces and Tripathi et al. (2017) underpins the need for its addressal while making policies.

Tracing women's mobility through folklore

We have to turn to folklore for tracing the spatial mobility of common woman. The male oriented historical documents and registrations have very little information about common women and their presence in public spaces. A common woman is almost absent in registered documents of history and only through folklore we can have some insights into her life. According to the Oxford Dictionary, folklore comprises beliefs, customs and stories of a community, that have been passed through generations by word of mouth. Women have vented their frustrations, anger, inner turmoils and little joys through folk tales and songs. Measures of historical attitudes, that are based on folklore are found to robustly predict contemporary values and economic choices (Michalopoulos *et al.*, 2021).

A folktale of Karnataka titled '*Kerege Haara*' poignantly describes the power hierarchies within the family. The youngest daughter-in-law, Bhagirati is chosen for human sacrifice to appease the forces that are believed to have prevented the filling of the newly built water tank. Her husband works in the army and the woman has no say in the matter. The helpless woman wants to visit her parents for the last time. She has to take the permission of every member of the family for visiting her parents (Dundes, 1996). It is said that during the period of Mugadaraya, a Jain king who ruled near the present town of Dharwad in Karnataka, during 1068-69, the first daughter-in-law Honnamma was sacrificed for appeasing the water deities. Similar cases of giving human sacrifices of pregnant women, daughters and daughters-in-law have been reported in many parts of Karnataka in our folk tales. Many such tanks bearing the names of women sacrificers are still found (Kalave, 2019).

Another folk song popular in North Karnataka, popular as 'Kadlimatti Station Master and Kashibai' is based on a real life incident (Vijayasathy, 2021). It stands as a metaphor for all the restrictive barriers faced by household women. Kashibai was in her parents' house for delivery. Her husband visited the family and wanted to take her home after four months. Her father wanted Kashibai to stay with them for a few more

months. This resulted in an unpleasant altercation and husband left the place saying that she could permanently stay in her parents' house. Panicked by the turn of events Kashibai tried to follow her husband, after sometime. The father did not send anyone with her in anger and she tried to catch up with her husband but could not, as she was carrying her baby on her head. It was a difficult path amidst dense forest area and by the time she reached the Kadlimatti station, her husband had left in the last train. She was forced to stay in the station and the station master tried to take advantage of her situation. She locked the station master inside his office but the sleeping child was inside and she refused to open the lock and had to watch the horrible scene of the child getting dismembered. She lost her child but saved her character, as per the belief of the society, which she valued more. Strong arguments supporting and opposing her stand have been received. Her lack of power in deciding her movements, dependence on male escorts, her maternal responsibilities, fear of society and loss of purity, all place her in a horrifying situation. We cannot ignore the incident as an aberration.

Recently, a case of a mother and child caught in the same situation was reported. A woman opted for a cheaper transportation 'tum tum', a system of sharing seats, for saving money. She was taken to a deserted area and her child was snatched from her and she was threatened to co-operate holding the child as hostage. However, it was not a repetition of Kadlimatti incident. The woman shouted for help and fortunately help arrived at the right moment. The recent incident clearly indicates the presence of barriers obstructing women's mobility (Vijayasarthy, 2021).

Female labour force participation and unpaid household work.

Women workforce participation plays a key role in the enhancement of social and economic growth of the society. During the pre-colonial period, women in India had access to agricultural as well as skilled labour. As it was the period of small-scale and household industries, women could directly participate in the production activities as well as manage the household chores. With the onset of industrialization and modernity, production activities got more urbanized. Women workforce was mostly employed in unskilled labour and was discriminated in terms of wages and other benefits. Her household responsibilities and security issues deterred her from taking up night shifts or from staying late hours at work. Women were denied training in skillful economic activities due to the belief that 'women were meant for household duties'. Patriarchy was reconstructed during colonial period.

SDG 5.4 aims for the recognition and valuation of unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies (United Nations, 2015). A household woman is categorized under 'non-productive consumer group' as her work is not monetized. According to World Economic Forum, on average, 66% of women's work is unpaid. Women's unpaid work is accountable for 7.5% of India's GDP. In Census 2011, people engaged in household work have been treated as 'non-workers'. Women are confined to their homes, with the biological burden of child-bearing and child care. Women have to cross several levels of barricades to step out of the thresholds of their homes. It is observed that valuation of women's care work and ensuring their participation in economic activities are the two specific ways to grow into a \$5 trillion economy (Manaktala *et al.*, 2023). As per the nationally representative '2019 Time Use Survey (TUS)' of India, 53% of females and 14% of males were found to not go out of home when observed during a fixed period of time in the urban scenario (Goel, 2023). Married women spend around eight hours in unpaid work. Even employed women spend an average of 5.8 hours a day on unpaid work.

As such India's female labour force participation rate is at 24% as per the data available in 2020. During the last two decades, female labour force participation rate has declined from 30% to 24%, though the estimated female labour force participation for the year 21-22 was 32.8%. As per World Economic Forum's

Gender Gap Report 2022, India ranked 135 out of 146. The enrolment rate of girls in 'tenth grade' has increased from 46% to 87%. China has the highest female labour force participation with 61% (Kataruka and Sharma, 2023). According to International Labour Organisation (ILO), about 26% of women are employed in India against 80% men. The Code of Social Security Act of 2020 has enhanced paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks. In addition to this, a woman government worker is entitled for 'child care leave' of 6 months. The 'Code on Wages 2019' ensures a no gender-based discrimination atmosphere at the workplace. Women comprise one third of the labour force in Karnataka.

Economic Impact of the 'Shakti' and 'Gruhalakshmi' Schemes

The economic impact of the guarantee schemes can be understood through a comparative analysis of the interim budget presented by the previous government and the recent one by the Congress government. The guarantee schemes have definitely affected the budgetary allocations and borrowings. In the new Karnataka state budget of 3.27 lakh crore rupees, 52,000 crore rupees have been allocated for fulfilling the five pre-poll guarantees of the ruling government for the entire year. The Shakti scheme has an annual cost of 4051.56 crore rupees. An allocation of 2800 crore rupees has been made, for the Shakti Scheme. The estimated cost of Gruha Lakshmi scheme is around 17,500 crore rupees for the present year. For a full year it is estimated to cost around 39,000 crore rupees.

The increased expenditure is partially balanced by an increase in taxes, reduction in allocation for certain other schemes, increase in guidance values of properties and an additional borrowing of 8000 crore rupees. The actual borrowing would increase by Rs 13,000 crore from Rs 72,000 crore in 2022-2023 to Rs 85,818 crore in the current financial year. This has resulted in reduced subsidies to milk procurement and to the departments of 'Agriculture & Horticulture' and 'Social Welfare'. Milk price was increased by Rs 3 per litre effective from 1st of August 2023. The statistics as on 3rd of July 2023, recorded around 12 crore women travelling free in bus services. Karnataka Government now has to reimburse an estimated amount of 4050 crore rupees a year to the four state road transport corporations towards free travel.

It is alleged that 11,000 crore rupees is diverted to guarantee schemes from Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP) and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) (Moudgal,2023). It is said that there will not be any constitutional grants for individual constituencies this term. As expected, there has been a steep hike in hotel food after the hike in the prices of milk products since August 1st 2023. The steep rise in the price of tomatoes has almost nullified the savings expected in a BPL family. Recently, the union workers of KKRTC complained that they have not received their salaries of the month of July even on Aug 8th. It is revealed that the government has sanctioned a subsidy amount of Rs 125.48 crore to the four transport corporations and KKRTC has received Rs 23.90 crore. This has resulted in cash crunch and the salaries are yet to be disbursed.

Drawing parallels from other such initiatives

Karnataka government is not the first government to have thought of such an initiative. In August 2019, the Delhi government adopted the policy of free transport facility for all women and the scheme was launched on 29th of October, 2019. Women of Delhi were issued pink passes which enabled them to travel without incurring any cost in all 5589 public buses serving in the city of Delhi. The entire expenditure of their travel is being borne by the Delhi government. In addition to this, the government extended 'Bus Marshal Programme'.

It is reported that the 'increased presence of females' in buses of Delhi has made women in general to feel secure to access public places. The buses are also equipped with CCTV cameras, panic buttons and live tracking system. The presence of a large number of female transport personnel and marshals has strengthened the 'women-friendly' eco-system (OPSI, 2023). Tamil Nadu government has recently

launched a women's basic income enhancement scheme called 'Kalaingar Magalir Urimai Thogai Thittam' scheme that recognises women's unpaid work and provides 1000 rupees per month to eligible household women.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the current times, women are seen in public places but a majority of them work as low-wage workers, working as garment factory workers, sanitation contact labourers, helpers, cleaners and domestic workers. A woman's entry into public place is restricted by the following factors, viz., 1) economic dependence on male members, 2) unequal share of household work, 3) unequal sharing of caring and nurturing work, 4) security reasons owing to non-availability of male escorts, and 5) position in the lowest rungs of hierarchy and power inequalities. With all these barriers her mobility almost ceases to exist. Her worldly knowledge never expands. She cannot comprehend or manage activity in 'public spaces'. She behaves either aggressively or in a subdued manner.

In many homes, a woman is subjected to domestic violence or physical abuse and has to stay in the same house with security issues as she doesn't have her own money to leave the house immediately. The work she does is never valued or monetized. Earning members of the family are usually treated better and cared for. A woman's invaluable work of nurturing and caring is considered her social and familial obligation. She has to be under the obligation of a male member of the family. This dependence keeps her under the pressure of burdening herself with more service to her family. Unless there is a change in power hierarchies no major change can happen. But atleast the 2000 rupees that she would get from the Gruhalakshmi scheme will help cover her minor expenses and enable her financially. This newly acquired financial independence and access to public spaces would definitely bring about little changes in the financial and social domains.

This paper comes to the conclusion that this scheme would aid in the improvement of women's mobility more than the scheme's intended increase in women's labour force participation in the state. Economists observe that it is difficult to correlate between free travel and labour force participation (Aravind, 2023). This statement is substantiated by the fact that the increased flow of women passengers in buses in Karnataka, after the launch of Shakti scheme, was directed more towards religious places than work places. In many homes, a woman is subjected to domestic violence or physical abuse and has to stay in the same house with security issues as she doesn't have her own money to leave the house immediately. The work she does is never valued or monetized. Earning members of the family are usually treated better and cared for. A woman's invaluable work of nurturing and caring is considered her social and familial obligation. She has to be under the obligation of a male member of the family. This dependence keeps her under the pressure of burdening herself with more service to her family.

Let us have a look at the benefits of every BPL household, particularly the female members, after the launch of the guarantee schemes. According to a statement by Ramalinga Reddy, Karnataka's Transport Minister, around 12 crore women have utilised free transport services as on July 3rd. Every day, about a whopping 1.10 crore people are travelling by bus and 55% of them are women. As on August 1st, 30.77 crore women have travelled in free buses and the value of their travel is 719.87 crore rupees. The government has so far released a grant of 125 crore rupees which is half the value of tickets for the month of June. This would definitely create problems for KSRTC in disbursing salary and maintaining bus services.

On August 1st, 71,29,844 women travelled and the value of their tickets was 15.6 crore. Women registered 16.73 crore rides between 11th of June and 10th of July 2023. The ticket value of women passengers from June 11th to July 30th is 687.49 crore rupees. According to the latest available data, as on August 15th, since its launch on June 11th, 40.2 crore women have utilised the free transport service and

the cumulative value of tickets purchased by them is Rs 9,30,34,82,844. The following is the table containing data regarding the number of women travelers, amount released and value of tickets earned.

Table 1
'Shakti' Women travelers since 11th of June till 1st of August 2023

Bus Corporations	No. of women travelers	Value of Tickets in crore (rupees)	Amount Released in crore (rupees)
KSRTC	9,43,29,979	272,72,48,196	47.1512
BMTC	10,04,84,110	128,66,57,817	21.8510
NWKRTC	7,18,74,954	180,93,50,533	32.5759
KKRTC	4,11,08,889	137,55,11,358	23.9040
Total	30,77,97,932	719,87,67,904	125.4821

Source: data collated from newspaper article (Prasad, 2023)

On an average, 55.7 lakh women are travelling daily after the launch of the scheme. It is said that a low wage worker can save 100 rupees a day by using free bus service. This scheme is sure to benefit low wage workers like poura kaarmikas, domestic helpers, garment workers and contract or temporary workers of various industries. The 'Gruhalakshmi' scheme acts as a supportive measure in strengthening women's mobility in public places in Karnataka.

As far as the allegations of women causing nuisance in buses, the heavy rush and women indulging in quarrels and bickering, one can understand such scenario as the initial problems of any major change. I don't think men would have behaved better in such an all-free situation. Little errors are bound to happen when half of the population enjoys its new found freedom and rediscovers mobility. When we analyse the social impact of the schemes we realise that it has far reaching benefits and the positive impact of the schemes weighs down on the negative impacts of the schemes. Also, adoption of measures of positive discrimination in favour of women are justified, as the Indian constitution itself empowers the state to do so (MWCD, 2001). If we analyse the cases of 'Nirbhaya' and 'Priyanka Reddy' we notice a common factor. Both were brutally raped and killed while travelling during the late evening hours. If a monitored, safe transport system was available to them they would have survived. Efficient and safe transport networks are crucial for a country's economic development. Mobility and safety are the two major factors that encourage female labour force participation and the increased number of women in public spaces would definitely improve the security factor.

The Congress Party denied the allegations of its schemes being just 'poll freebies', and hailed the guarantee schemes as 'tools of empowerment'. The question is whether the government would manage the financial situation efficiently, without causing burden to non-beneficiaries, after the launch of all five guarantees. If a poll freebie can usher in freedom and public mobility, why [deny its positive impact?](#)

References

[1] Ananthamurthy, U. R. (2012), "Growing up as a Writer in Indian Language" [Lecture], 17th Dr. Sarvapelli Radhakrishnan Memorial Lecture, Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), Shimla. 25 June.

- [2] Antonopoulos, R. (2009), "The unpaid care work - paid work connection", working paper [86], Policy Integration and Statistics Department, International Labour Office, Geneva.
- [3] Aravind, I. (2023), "Karnataka: Over 12 cr women have taken the free bus ride. What long-term impact will the scheme have on female travelers?", *The Economic Times*, 08 July, available at: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/karnataka-over-12-crore-women-have-taken-the-free-bus-ride-what-will-be-the-schemes-long-term-impact-on-female-travellers/articleshow/101601519.cms> (accessed on 20 August 2023).
- [4] Banerjee, S., Alok, S., Kumar, R. and Lakhtakia, S. (2023), "Does a woman's life before marriage affect her empowerment level? – Perspective from rural India", *International Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 50 No. 5, pp.643-661.
- [5] Chakrabarty, R. (2023), "Female labour participation declining in India: Why are women not working?", *India Today*, 09 June, available at: <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/jobs-and-careers/story/female-labour-participation-declining-in-india-why-are-women-not-working-2391034-2023-06-09> (accessed on 11 June 2023).
- [6] Duflo, E. (2012), "Women empowerment and economic development", *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol. 50 No. 4, pp. 1051-1079.
- [7] Dundes, A. (1996), *The Walled-Up Wife: A Casebook*, University of Wisconsin Press, United States.
- [8] Goel, R. (2023), "Gender gap in mobility outside home in urban India", *Travel Behaviour and Society*, Vol. 32, p.100559, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tbs.2023.01.004> (accessed on 22 August 2023).
- [9] Gupta, K. and Yesudian, P.P. (2006), "Evidence of women's empowerment in India: a study of socio-spatial disparities", *GeoJournal*, Vol. 65 No. 4, pp. 365-380, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-006-7556-z> (accessed on 2 October 2023).
- [10] Hanson, S., 2010. Gender and mobility: new approaches for informing sustainability. *Gender, Place & Culture*, Vol. 17 No.1, pp. 5-23, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09663690903498225> (accessed on 4 October 2023).
- [11] Ibrahim, S. and Alkire, S. (2007), "Agency and empowerment: a proposal for internationally comparable indicators", *Oxford Development Studies*, Vol. 35 No. 4, pp. 379-403.
- [12] Jagori. (2007). "Is this our city? Mapping safety for women in Delhi", available at: <http://www.jagori.org/sites/default/files/publication/IS-THIS-OUR-CITY.pdf> (accessed on 6 October 2023).
- [13] Kalave, S. (2019), "Kerege Haara'vaadavara Karuna Kathe!", *Udayavani*, 1 September, available at: <https://m.undayavani.com/article/the-mercy-story-of-the-lake/693154> (accessed on 12 July 2023).
- [14] Kataruka, A. and Sharma, H. (2023), "In India, women do seven hours of housework, men under three hours", *The Hindu*, 2 August, available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/data/data-in-india-women-do-seven-hours-of-housework-men-under-three-hours/article67149882.ece> (accessed on 3 August 2023).
- [15] Kishor, S. and Gupta, K. (2009), *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in India. National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3), India, 2005–06*, Mumbai: International Institute for Population Sciences, ICF Macro, Calverton, MD, available at: https://rchiips.org/nfhs/a_subject_report_gender_for_website.pdf (accessed on 15 August 2023).

- [16] Kouame, A. T. and Ollivier, G. P. (2023), "Women's mobility must be a key focus in urban policy", *Hindustan Times*, 8 March, available at: <https://epaper.hindustantimes.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=83246a1687&imageview=0> (accessed on 8 March 2023).
- [17] Mahadevia, D. (2015), *Gender Sensitive Transport Planning for Cities in India*, Promoting Low Carbon Transport in India Project, UNEP DTU Partnership, Centre on Energy, Climate and Sustainable Development Technical University, Denmark, available at: <http://www.unep.org/transport/lowcarbon/publications.asp>.
- [18] Malhotra, A. and Schuler, S.R. (2005), "Women's empowerment as a variable in international development", in Narayan, D. (Ed.), *Measuring Empowerment: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, The World Bank, Washington, DC, pp. 219-246.
- [19] Manaktala, S., Mahajan, N. and Bharathram, V. (2023), "The measure of the working woman", *The Hindu*, 19 October, available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-measure-of-the-working-woman/article67435724.ece> (accessed on 19 October 2023).
- [20] Michalopoulos, S. and Xue, M.M. (2021), "Folklore", Working paper 25430, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, MA, doi: <https://doi.org/10.3386/w25430> (accessed on 21 September 2023).
- [21] Ministry of Labour and Employment (2023). Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) of women shows an increasing trend as per the annual PLFS reports [Press Release], Press Information Bureau (PIB), 20 March, available at: <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1908961> (accessed on 21 March 2023).
- [22] Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) (2001), *National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001*, MWCD, GOI, New Delhi, available at: <https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/National%20Policy%20for%20Empowerment%20of%20Women%202001.pdf> (accessed on 10 September 2023).
- [23] Moudgal, S. (2023), "Using SC, ST funds for guarantee schemes annoys Dalit leaders; govt urges patience", *The Times of India*, 7 August, available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/using-sc-st-funds-for-guarantee-schemes-annoys-dalit-leaders-govt-urges-patience/articleshow/102492479.cms> (accessed on 7 August 2023).
- [24] Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OPSI) (2023), "Pink Passes – Enhancing Women's Mobility and Workforce Participation through Improved Public Transport", OPSI, Directorate for Public Governance, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), available at: <https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/pink-passes/> (accessed on 12 August 2023).
- [25] Prasad, S. (2023), "Karnataka transport bodies seek Rs 250-cr reimbursement under women's free bus travel scheme", *The Indian Express*, 10 July, available at: <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/bangalore/karnataka-transport-bodies-women-free-bus-travel-scheme-8665089-8824301/> (accessed on 12 July 2023).
- [26] Sagar, M. (2015), "History of education for women in Karnataka", *Bangalore Mirror*, 18 January, available at: <https://bangaloremirror.indiatimes.com/opinion/views/ambal-narasimmaiyyengar-sri-chamaraja-wodeyar-krishnaraja-wodeyar-maharaja-sree-chamarajendra-wodeyar-smt-rukmaniyamma/articleshow/45933321.cms> (accessed on 19 August 2023).

- [27] Sangari, K. and Vaid, S. (Eds.) (1990). Recasting women: Essays in Indian colonial history, Rutgers University Press, New Jersey.
- [28] Suneja, K. and Sharma, Y.S. (2023), "Centre weighs methods to quantify household chores done by women", The Economic Times, 1 May, available at: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/centre-weighs-methods-to-quantify-household-chores-done-by-women/articleshow/99917219.cms> (accessed on 12 September 2023).
- [29] Tripathi, K., Borrion, H., & Belur, J. (2017), "Sexual harassment of students on public transport: An exploratory study in Lucknow, India", Crime Prevention and Community Safety, Vol. 19 No. 3, pp. 240–250, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41300-017-0029-0>
- [30] United Nations (2015), Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda> (accessed on 27 April 2023).
- [31] Vijayasarthy, S. N. (2021), "Kadlimatti Kashibaiyantha Prakarana: Samayapragnyeinda sheela matthu magu ulisikonda mahile", News 18 Kannada, 29 January, available at: <https://kannada.news18.com/news/district/woman-saves-herself-from-getting-raped-by-autodriver-in-raichur-sbr-snvs-522017.html> (accessed on 21 September 2023).

