

Karnataka becomes the first State to pass the Good Samaritan bill in State Assembly

November 30 2016, Belgaum: As you may be aware, Karnataka Government passed the “Karnataka Good Samaritan and Medical Professional (Protection and Regulation during Emergency Situations) Bill” today in the Lower House of State Assembly making it the first state in India to move towards enacting a Good Samaritan Law.

This Bill, drafting of which was supported by SaveLIFE Foundation (SLF), will give legislative backing to the landmark judgment of the Supreme Court dated March 30, 2016, in the matter *SaveLIFE Foundation versus Union of India*, in which the apex court gave “force of law” to the guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures issued by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways for the protection of Good Samaritans, who come to the aid of road accident victims.

In the absence of an efficient Emergency Medical Services system in India, bystanders can play a crucial role in providing assistance to victims within the first one hour. In fact, the Law Commission of India had noted in its 201st report that over 50 per cent of road accident deaths can be averted with timely medical care within the first one hour. Considering that Karnataka is one of the top 5 states in road accidents deaths in India with over 10,800 people being killed in 2015 alone, the proposed legislation will potentially save over 5000 lives annually.

The Bill aims to provide protection to Good Samaritans, who come to the aid of victims of road accident and other emergency situations, from ensuing legal and procedural hassles. Besides protecting a Good Samaritan from any criminal or civil liability which may arise out of helping an injured victim, the Bill addresses key issues that make bystanders refrain from coming forward to help- detention at hospitals, harassment by police, repeated court appearances, and to be compelled to be a witness in the matter. The Bill also provides protection to medical professionals during their examination as a witness.

Mr. Piyush Tewari - Founder & CEO, SaveLIFE Foundation welcoming the decision said, "By passing the Good Samaritan Bill in the Lower House of State Assembly, Karnataka has set the right precedent for other states. The enactment of the Bill will put an end to the fear that bystanders have in helping victims of road accidents and other emergency situations. This will be a game-changer for Karnataka in reducing the number of road crash fatalities, the annual figure of which is over 10,000. We hope that other States will follow Karnataka's lead."