

Mohammad Gaddafi



Nothing is more gratifying for Mohammad Gaddafi than hearing the kind and encouraging words uttered by his passengers, who he ferries in his bike taxi every day. It has just been a few years that he, along with his business partner Balaji, launched 'MaaUla', India's first ever taxi service run by physically challenged person, in Chennai and they already have a growing number of devoted customers.

Starting a venture like this was not easy for Gaddafi, a PhD scholar in history from Presidency College, Chennai. However, disillusioned by the lack of empathy for his disability, this scholar decided to show the world that, disability is just a state of mind. He joined hands with Balaji to start the taxi service and within no time their venture became

extremely popular in the capital of Tamil Nadu.

An apt name for his Bike taxi service 'MaaUla' in English means 'A journey with the differently-abled', where in 'Maa' stands for 'MaatruThirunaaligal' meaning 'differently abled' and 'Ula' stands for 'journey'.

Starting the venture, Gaddafi and his friends were confronted by their share of obstacles. However, slowly but steadily their bike taxis gained popularity, primarily by word-of-mouth, with minimal investment in advertising. What has worked particularly well for them is that a number of customers have turned into regulars.

Gaddafi presently has 30 bike-taxi drivers working under him in Chennai and 25 drivers in Tirunelveli. The charges for their service are also very moderate - Rs.25 for the first two kilometers and Rs.10 per

kilometer beyond that and Rs.15 per kilometer at night, the bike taxi service is able to both provide competitive rates and services while at the same time take care of the needs of its drivers, who on an average are able to earn Rs.25,000 per month.

There is still a long way to go for their venture as they await the official permission from the government to drive bike taxis. Yet, despite hiccups, MaaUla is a significant opportunity for its drivers who are unable to find work elsewhere.

While still a small operation, Gadaffi has bigger plans for MaaUla. He intends to broaden the base of his company by starting this initiative in other districts too.

