



# **DAILY NEWSPAPER ANALYSIS**

**THE HINDU**

**(02<sup>nd</sup> July, 2019)**

**Topic: GS1/GS2 - Gender based  
Subsidies**



**THE HINDU**  
**Daily News Paper**

## Is There a case for free rides for Women?

### Context:-

- The gender-based public transport fare subsidy programme, announced by Delhi government, has not been tested anywhere in India in the past.
- Proponents claim that the policy will protect and liberate women. Critics argue that it is financially unviable and unfair.

### Argument in Favour of Gender based Subsidies:-

- Global Practice with Gender Based Subsidies in Public Commuters: Cities often provide public transport fare subsidies to all or some citizens to encourage them to use public transport, or for easing their travel cost burdens.
  - Singapore, for example, offers a discount to rail commuters who are willing to travel before the morning rush-hour.
  - Paris, with a population of over 2 million, has announced a comparable plan.
  - Berlin offered women a 21% ticket discount for one day in March this year to highlight the gender wage gap.
  - In India, however, urban transport fare discounts are less common, although concessions for

- seniors, students, and other socioeconomic groups are available for **government-operated flights and long-distance railway services**.
- **Realising the Human Rights of Freedom of Movement:** Fare discounts intend to make public transport truly public as some people are at a relative disadvantage in urban transportation markets due to their unique social, economic, and health circumstances.
  - If we consider transportation as a fundamental social need and providing mobility for the transportation-disadvantaged as our collective responsibility, then **specific supply-side investments** or fare price discounts to help the disadvantaged travel, conduct activities and prosper are therefore justified.
- **Disadvantaged faced by Women due to Lack of Safe Mobility:** Women in India travel far less than men, and this has significant impacts on their education, employment, and enjoyment.
  - A study in Delhi found that college girls, compared to boys, chose lower ranked colleges with safe and reliable transport access.
  - Similarly, an estimated 60% of women workers in India choose to work from home or at a place which is less than a km from home, according to the 2011 Census.
  - The remaining working women tend to rely excessively on public transport, according to a World Bank Study conducted in Delhi.

- **Gender Discrimination Restrict Women to Realize freedom of Movement:** Wage discrimination, gender segregation in employment, and household labour divisions contribute to gender inequality in transportation. Because men's jobs are considered to be more valuable, they tend to own the household vehicles and commute privately.
  - When Delhi Metro hiked fares last year, around 70% of women surveyed in a study suggested that they would have to choose a less safe travel option for work, or travel less.
  - Compromises on education and jobs for travel purposes is one of the reasons for women earning less than men, leaving the workforce, and consequently being more cash-poor than men.
  - Finally, limited money to travel also means that women are willing to forgo hospital visits, significantly affecting their health.

### **Challenges to Free and Discounted Public Transport for Women:-**

- High cost of the subsidies aimed at the transportation-disadvantaged to the Government
- And will such subsidies make it difficult for public transport to achieve its other major goal — reducing car use and cleaning up the air? As operational cost will increase.

### **Suggestions:-**

- **Revenues from Appropriately Charging Personal Motorised Travel:** Personal motorised vehicle travel is

- highly subsidised globally, including in India hence making driving is cheap and inflicts on society in the form of **traffic congestion, environmental pollution, and distortions in urban form**.
  - Indian cities must consider pricing interventions such as **congestion charges, mileage-based road use charges, parking charges, and higher petrol taxes** so that private driving costs better reflect full social costs.
  - London and Stockholm, for example, have been charging for congestion for over a decade.
  - Such measures, in addition to discouraging driving, can help governments generate funds for expanding, improving, and operating relatively cleaner transportation alternatives such as public transport.
- Voluntary opting out the scheme like PAHAL scheme for LPG.

### Way Forward:-

- A subsidy like this is most likely to benefit women who might consider taking up jobs for which they are better suited but are further away from home. Women can engage in a range of activities that promote their well being.
- Free public transport can therefore bring more women to public spaces, and, consequently, make those spaces safer for women.
- Better public transport service is key to getting people out of cars, reducing air pollution, and making cities more liveable.