

# A Woman Can Definitely 'Drive' Her Way Out!

*Dr Pooja Gupta\**

In the current fast changing world, one needs to keep pace with the time. With almost everything evolving, how can life of a woman be an exception to it? She has also changed herself, to be in sync with the dynamic world. She has become more educated, learned, aware, groomed, confident, decisive, independent, and self-reliant. I believe, it is for good and betterment of the society as a whole.

With this, she has also learned to travel on her own. More women these days drive a vehicle themselves to commute. It's common now to see women driving a two-wheeler or a four-wheeler. There are many women drivers in public or commercial transport services too, be it metro, bus, truck, or any other. We also know of women pilots flying planes and jets. But, unfortunately equally common is the people's unpleasant attitude towards what the women can do. It's sad to say that though times have improved and women have transformed a lot, but not the people's perception about their capabilities.

## Pre-set Notion

There's an already set belief in the society that driving isn't meant for girls to be learnt [1, 3]. It is the purview of a man. People specifically teach their sons how to ride a two-wheeler, and then a four-wheeler. They are hardly bothered about whether their daughters would learn driving or not, though they'd make sure they learn all household chores. It is considered absolutely necessary for a male child to learn how to drive, but not for a female child. Studies have shown the existence of gender typecasts related with driving in different human societies worldwide [2, 3]. Most parents do not consider it an essential skill for their daughters and hence do not pay attention to or let them learn driving. Many daughters aren't aware of the fact that this is also an important expertise till they go out and 'see' the world to realize that. Sometimes, when a girl, owing to her own aptitude, starts picking-up the ability, then the parents 'think' it to be okay for her to do so. But, somewhere or the other, sooner or later, she may not get the ample opportunity to master the skill or learn by practicing. Most households have only one vehicle. Unsurprisingly the male members usually get priority [4].

---

\* Assistant Professor  
Ramjas College, University of Delhi

## **People's Attitude and Facing the Disgrace on Road**

**Women while driving on road become victim of public harassment or bullying. Women drivers are usually the target of pranks and male disrespect [4]. Women drivers, especially, public transport drivers such as bus and auto get those 'shock' looks or comments full of disbelief from people.**

**Women have no choice but to ignore that 'glance' or stares she gets from other fellow male drivers on road or annoying honking by them. She can very well face-read them when they think that she should not be here, it's not her place to be, driving on these roads or this is not her territory to be.**

**When a woman drives slowly, as they think, they pass comments like 'if you don't know how to drive, they why you do so?', or 'why have you come out in it?' If such people see a car to stop at the signal, they again pre-assume that it is driven by a woman. If they find it to be so or whenever then they think the woman is wrong, honk unnecessarily, and harshly, try their best to overtake and drive rashly. A study spread over nine countries has shown that males are more careless about the risks associated with a road accident [5]. According to several studies, women are safe drivers as they do not tend to over speed or drive rashly and are considered good drivers as compared to men [6]. Noticeably, women are reported to drive better if they are not stereotyped [3].**

**In this way, a woman on Indian roads faces a lot of gender bias and discrimination. It also creates barriers for her to take up the job of a commercial driver or any job that requires her to drive [7].**

## **People's Expression of 'Surprise'**

**When people see a woman driver, in a bus or an auto, or a rickshaw, they are usually taken aback in astonishment! They give an expression of being too surprised to see something unusual 'out of this world', but only to despise the dignity of a woman driver.**

**Sadly, friends and family of a woman also do not believe and are also not ready to do so that she can drive well, unless they 'see' themselves. It's hard for them to believe that she can drive and well enough to be on the roads on her own. They show their disbelief, raise their doubts and pass their resentments often wrapped in sugar-coated comments, which according to them are 'compliments'!**

## **Breaking the Stereotype**

**Woman has broken the convention of being confined only to the four walls of home to come out to work. Taking up the job of a driver, or driving one's own car, is only just a part of it.**

A woman behind the steering is an open challenge to the hoary idea of patriarchy. Moreover, our society still don't think giving freedom of mobility to women is right as it is mistakenly taken to be a means of misusing freedom and competing with men [7]. Nonetheless, every time a woman drives on road, she follows the traffic rules but breaks the stereotype.

### Let's Hope For The Best!

There is a need to change only three things – mindset, attitude and perception towards women. Hopefully, then respect for whatever she does would come automatically! Be it doing the household chores, taking care of children and elderly at home, doing a job, driving on roads or anything rather everything what she does. Even if that doesn't happen instantly, I'm optimistic it'll happen in near future as time is bound to change. Many things have changed, several are changing and a lot will change. Till then, I'm sure you would agree that a woman can definitely 'drive' her way out to lead a happy and prosperous life of not only hers but of all around her!

### References

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page/women-cant-drive-you-said-the-mindset-needs-a-change/article7727299.ece>
2. Granié M-A and E Papafava. Gender stereotypes associated with vehicle driving among French preadolescents and adolescents. *Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour*, Elsevier, 2011, 14 (5), pp.341-353. ff10.1016/j.trf.2011.04.002ff. ffhal-00851153
3. Moè A, M Cadinu, A Maass 2015. Women drive better if not stereotyped, *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 85:199-206, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aap.2015.09.021>.
4. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/sunday-times/no-ban-but-plenty-of-bias-why-so-few-women-drive-in-india/articleshow/64809217.cms>
5. Cordellieri P, B Francesca, F Fabio, S Roberto, P Laura, GA Maria 2016. Gender Effects in Young Road Users on Road Safety Attitudes, Behaviors and Risk Perception. *Frontiers in Psychology*, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01412>.
6. <https://www.bankbazaar.com/driving-licence/women-are-more-safe-drivers.html>
7. <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/opinion-no-womans-land-female-cab-drivers-on-indian-roads/390319>

□□□□