Right to Walk on Footpath a Fundamental Right

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Polity and Governance*

Why in News?

Recently, The Supreme Court of India declared the freedom to walk on demarcated and well-maintained footpaths a fundamental right.

Constitutional Basis

- **Article 21 – *Right to Life and Personal Liberty.***
- Walking safely is part of the simplest human activity, directly connected to life.
- **Article 19(1)(a), Article 19(1)(b) and Article 19 (1)(c) –** Walking embodies *expressional, congregational, and associational rights*.

- **19(1)(a) –** Freedom of Speech and Expression
- **19(1)(b) –** Freedom of Assembly,
- **19(1)(c) –** Freedom of Association

- **Article 14 –** *Right to Equality.*
- Common spaces must not be monopolised by motorised vehicles; pedestrians deserve equal protection.

Court's Observations

- **Historical Role of Walking –** Walking powered India's freedom struggle, politics, and social reforms.
- **Urbanisation** – Governments focused on urbanisation and motorisation, built wide roads and expressways but neglected footpaths, treating walkers as inconvenience.
- **Minimum Duty of Authorities** – Providing footpaths is the basic duty of municipal bodies.

Statutory Concerns

- **Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 –** The Act focused only on vehicles and ignored walkers' rights.
- **Supreme Court Directions –** Court asked government to frame a *statutory framework* recognising the right to walk, fixing responsibility, and giving remedies.
- **Regulatory Body Suggestion –** Court suggested creating a *regulatory body* to enforce and implement pedestrian rights.

Reference

The Hindu | Right to walk

