

Need for an Anti-Superstition Law

What is the issue?

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- There are many regions in the country which still witness human sacrifices, abuses and exploitation in the name of religion.

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- India needs a targeted legislation to effectively curb such inhuman superstitious practices.

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What is the need?

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- **IPC** - The provisions in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) is not equipped to take care of crimes committed on account of black magic and other superstitious practices.

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- The cognisance of human sacrifice is in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) only after the murder is committed.

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- **Nature** - The relationship between a devotee and so-called godman is of a peculiar nature, often marked by subtly identifiable violence.

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- Also, the acts involving human sacrifice cannot be stopped as they are often preceded by some puja and offerings.

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- These religious ceremonies are certainly not banned under any law.

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What is Maharashtra's legislation in this regard?

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- Maharashtra has implemented the Maharashtra Prevention and Eradication of Human Sacrifice and Other Inhuman, Evil and Aghori Practices and Black Magic Act, 2013.
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- This anti-superstition law primarily addresses exploitation in the name of religion.
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- The legislation has a capacity to act as a deterrent for many inhuman practices.
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- It has considerably curbed the act of human sacrifice as it is banned under the law.
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- A section in the legislation specifically addresses and checks claims made by 'godmen' who say they have supernatural powers.
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- The law also makes it possible to curtail activities of so-called godmen before they become too powerful.
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What is the way forward?

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- Opponents to the legislation in Maharashtra had claimed that the law would affect the religious practices of the Hindus.
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- However, superstitious practices that are utterly dehumanising, brutal and exploitative need to be dealt with by a specific law.
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- India should seriously consider bringing in place a legislation similar to that of the Maharashtra anti-superstition law.
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- It is not to be denied that every superstition could not be removed by the force of law; social and mental changes are also necessary.
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Source: The Hindu

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