

After a long and gruelling campaign by ANS for the past eight years to enact a Law against Superstition which harm the citizens, the Maharashtra State Government under the leadership of the new Chief Minister Hon. Sushilkumar Shinde has passed in their Cabinet meeting such a law and sent it to the Central Government for their approval. The antecedents and the efforts that were put into by reformists to achieve such bold act are quite praiseworthy, though we have to go a long way to achieve the desired results. This will be the first law of its kind in India and may be in the world.

As the population of modern human increased on our planet, and they began to live in larger groups in tribes, to prevent dispute and aggressive behavior between members of the group or tribe, certain rules and regulations became necessary so that the member of the group could lead a relatively peaceful life. As human beings civilized more acceptable rules and regulations became necessary. As the human species civilizes into a more advanced and noble society, these rules and regulations or laws, which have regulated life of human societies, are modified when ever necessary from time to time. This evolution is still on. In our part of the world a large segment of the present society requires appropriate laws to protect them from unscrupulous members of society, which use misinformation and misguidance to cheat and harm them. To be more precise, at this moment of time in this part of the world superstitions exist in a very large extent in the majority of uneducated and educated strata of society. It is also a fact that their exist large number of people whose main means of livelihood is to misuse these superstitious beliefs and fill their own coffers. If societies have to be more civilized this situation has to be changed. This could be changed on the one hand by educating the people and on the other by preventing unscrupulous elements in society from taking advantage of the ignorance of people. Hence it is very necessary to enact a law to protect the people from such unscrupulous members of society.

Need for the Law: Questions are always posed as to whether society changes simply by enactment of rules and laws? The ineffectiveness of laws for prohibition of dowry and prohibition of alcohol consumption are cited to prove that society dose not change. But this is not the full truth. Even if we accept, that enactments of laws alone, does not compel the society to change, historical evidence in the cases of prohibition of practice of Sati, and other such uncivilized practices, proves that enactment of laws has helped society to give up such evil, uncivilized practices. Moreover, if there is an active social agitation going on in the society, against some undesirable belief systems and if a large section of society is actively participating in eradicating harmful superstitious beliefs, and then the enactment of such a law will certainly accelerate this process. Moreover, people, social reformers and well-wishers desire that in the

interest of the community, their representatives should ratify such an act as early as possible.

Draft Bill: The novelty of this draft law is that it does not get entrapped in the argument of defining faith and blind faith. Hence at this point of time, what is to be considered as blind faith is given in a separate schedule. This list can be periodically updated. Hence the impediment for the enactment of this law has been overcome. The list is quite really exhaustive and includes most common superstitions prevailing in Maharashtra. The list includes

1. to perform Karni, Bhanamati,
2. to perform magical rites in the name of supernatural power,
3. to offer ash, talisman, charms etc. for the purpose of exorcism and to drive out evil spirits or ghosts,
4. to claim possession of supernatural powers and to advertise this claim,
5. to defame, disgrace the names of erstwhile Saints/ Gods, by claiming to be there reincarnation and thus cheating the gullible and God-fearing simple folks.
6. to claim to be possessed by divine power or evil power and then perform miracles in the name of such powers.
7. to punish and to beat mentally ill patients in the belief that they are possessed by evil spirits.
8. to perform Aghori rites.
9. to perform so called black magic and spread fear in society.
10. to perform "Gopal Santan Vidhi" to beget a male offspring.
11. to oppose scientific medical treatment and to coerce to adopt Aghori treatment.
12. to sell or deal in so-called magic stones, talisman, bracelets, charms.
13. to become possessed by supernatural powers and then pretend to give answers to any questions in this mental state.
14. to sacrifice innocent animals for the appeasement of gods or spirits.
15. to dispense magical remedies for curing rabies and snake bites.
16. to dispense medical remedies with claims of assured fertility.