

05-01-2023

## Conversion Law

### Why in Newspapers?

Recently, the Supreme Court agreed to hear a plea by the **Madhya Pradesh government** challenging a **High Court order** that **barred interfaith couples** from being prosecuted **without informing the district magistrate**.

### Quick Issue?

- The Supreme Court said that **all religious conversions cannot be considered illegal by the state**.
- Madhya Pradesh's **Solicitor General Tushar Mehta** argued that "**conversion in the country is based on marriage**", despite **Justice M.R. A bench** headed by Shah refused to grant an interim stay on the High Court order.



### Historical Background?

- The Madhya Pradesh High Court in November last year, in a judgment related to the **Madhya Pradesh Religious Freedom Act**, barred the state government from prosecuting "**adult couples who have entered into an inter-faith marriage**".
- In which there was a provision that **if adults do an inter-religious marriage of their own free will without informing the District Magistrate**, it would be considered a **violation of Section 10 of the Madhya Pradesh Religious Freedom Act (MPFRA), 2021**.
- Under Section 10, a "**declaration of intention to convert**" has to

### Other Key Facts?

#### Supreme Court opinion on forced conversion

- SC, while hearing the petition, sought directions to the Center and states to take **stringent steps to check such conversions**.
- Court has said that **forced conversion is very dangerous** and it can affect the security of the **country and freedom of religion and conscience**.
- Because if a person intentionally converts **another person**, it is different from his trying to propagate or **spread the principles of his religion**.

#### Anti-conversion laws in different states

- Over the years, many states have enacted '**freedom of religion**' laws to prohibit religious conversions carried out by force, fraud or inducement.
- Orissa Freedom of Religion Act, 1967, Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act, 2003, Jharkhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2017, Uttarakhand Religious Freedom Act, 2018, Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Act,

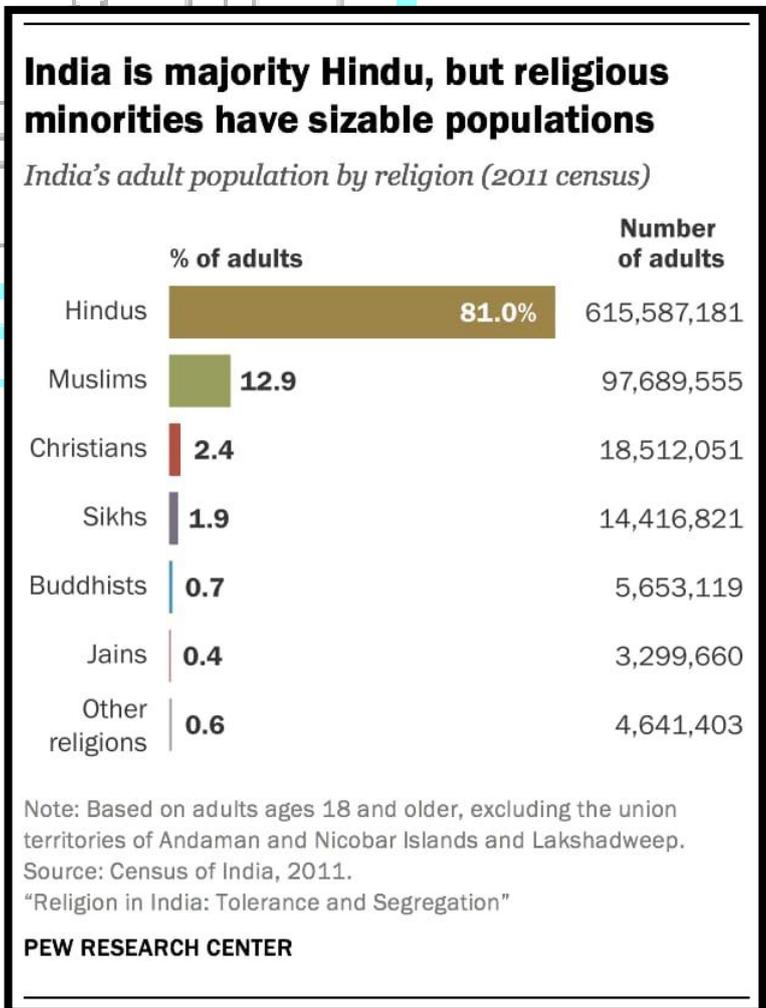
be made by the convert as well as the priest performing the conversion before the District Magistrate 60 days in advance. Only then can couples from different religions legally marry.

- **Madhya Pradesh Religious Freedom Act (MPFRA, 2021):** - This act was enacted by the state government to **curb religious conversions done only for the purpose of marriage.**
  - The **purpose of the new law was to replace the existing Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 1968.**

**दैनिक भास्कर** | एक महीने पहले देना होगा एफिडेविट

धर्म परिवर्तन में अब कानूनी प्रक्रिया का पालन लाजमी	एक महीना पहले संबंधित मजिस्ट्रेट को बताना होगा	हालांकि मूल धर्म में वापसी पर कोई नोटिस जरूरी नहीं
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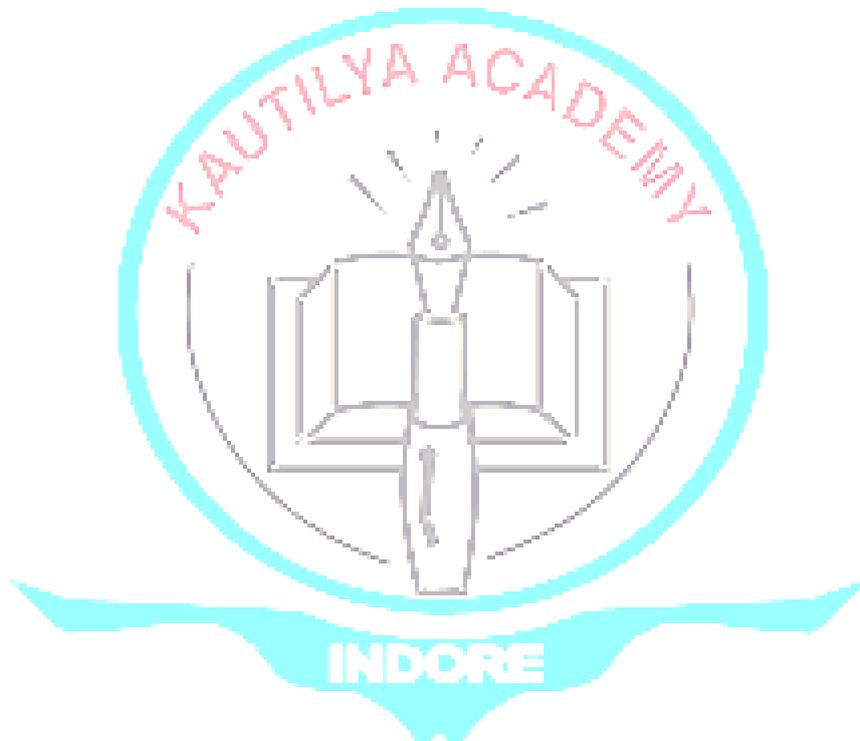
- **Section 5 of MPFRA, 2021** prohibits illegal conversion from one religion to another by **force, undue influence, coercion, any other fraudulent means**, inducement or promise of marriage.
- Violators face **imprisonment of one year to five years.**
- There is a **provision of imprisonment of five to 10 years and a fine of one lakh rupees** for mass conversion.
- Cases under the Act are **cognizable** (meaning arrest can be made without warrant) and **non-bailable.**
- Anyone including the victim's parents or siblings or guardian can file a complaint with the permission of the local court.
- The complaint will be **investigated by a police officer of the rank of sub-inspector and above.**
- **What is religious conversion?** Conversion refers to **leaving one's religious sect and adopting and following the beliefs of another religion.** Thus "**conversion**" describes giving up the observance of one sect and **affiliation with another.**
- **What is the need for anti-conversion laws?** :- Individual right to freedom of conscience and religion under **Article 25** cannot be extended as a collective





right to convert.

- In recent times, many instances have come to light where **people marry people of other religion by wrong way or hiding their own religion** and after getting married, they force such other person to convert to their religion.
- **Constitutional Provisions:** - Indian Constitution under **Article 25** guarantees **freedom to profess, propagate and practice religion**.
  - However, **no person shall be compelled to forcibly impose his religious beliefs**.
- **Existing Laws:** - At present **there is no central law prohibiting or regulating conversion**.
  - However, since 1954, on several occasions, **private member bills have been introduced in Parliament** (but never approved) **to regulate religious conversions**.



## International Millet Year

### Why in Newspapers?

The year 2023 is being celebrated globally as the **International Millet Year**. It was proposed by India and approved by the United Nations General Assembly. This proposal of India was approved by the United Nations General Assembly on 5 March 2021. It aims to create awareness about the production and consumption of millets globally.

### Quick Issue?

- Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's effort was behind this effort to make India a **global center of millets** and to make the **International Year of Millets 2023** a 'people's movement'. About **80 percent of Asia's and 20 percent of the world's coarse grains** are produced in India.
- Millets are currently cultivated in **more than 130 countries**, which are considered a **traditional food for more than half a billion people** in Asia and Africa. However, its cultivation is declining in many countries and adequate measures are not being taken to meet the challenges of climate change and food security.



### Historical Background?

- Government of India has given an opportunity to celebrate IYM and **establish India as the global hub of millets**. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also shared his vision to make IYM a "**people's movement**".
- Millets are **small seeded grasses** that are often called "**nutri-cereals**". Some common types of millets include **jowar, bajra, ragi and kodo millet**.
- These cereals are a staple cereal crop for millions of **dryland smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia** and provide a range of benefits such as **nutrition, income and livelihoods for farmers**.
- They can also be used to make **food, feed, fodder, biofuel and alcohol**.
- Millets are nutritionally superior to wheat and rice** because of their **higher protein levels** and more balanced amino acid profiles.

### Other Key Facts?

#### What Is Coarse Grain

- Fat grains are considered a **storehouse of nutrients**.
- These grains rich in **beta-carotene, niacin, vitamin-B6, folic acid, potassium, magnesium, zinc** etc. are also called superfoods.
- Cereals like **Jowar, Bajra, Ragi (Madua), Maize, Barley, Kodo, Sama, Bajra, Sava, Small grains or Kutki, Kangni and Cheena** are millets i.e., coarse grains.

