

8. Karnataka Anti-superstition Law

Prelims Level: Governance-Policies.

Mains Level: GS-II Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections of the Population by the centre and States and the Performance of the Schemes: Mechanisms laws, Institutions, and bodies constituted for the Protection and Betterment of Vulnerable Sections.

Why in News?

- A controversial Anti-Superstition Law in Karnataka was formally notified by the Current Government.

Provisions of the Earlier Drafts:

- The law, which was initially drafted as the Karnataka Anti Superstition Bill, 2013, was a pet project of former CM Siddaramaiah.
- The model Bill held human dignity as its central tenet and sought eradication of irrational practices found in different communities.
- The first draft made practices like inflicting self-wounds and conversion through bribery illegal.
- Some of the proposals opposed by religious leaders and political parties in the early draft were the ban on practices such as the carrying of priests in palanquins, worshipping the feet of religious leaders.
- It sought to ban Made Snana practised in the Dakshina Kannada region where Dalits roll over the remains of food consumed by upper castes.

The Current Version:

- A Bill with sizable consensus across the political spectrum finally evolved in 2017. A total of 16 practices have been banned under the law.
- The practice of Vaastu, astrology, pradakshina or circumambulation of holy places, yatras, parikramas performed at religious places were kept out of the purview of the law.
- Made Snana was banned under the law with respect to having Dalits roll over leftover food.
- The practice has now been modified to be voluntary and not involving leftover food.
- Practices such as barring menstruating women from entering houses of worship and their homes, coercing people to take part in fire-walks, and beating up people by declaring them evil, are among the irrational practices that have been banned under the 2017 law.

Penalties:

- The law stipulates “imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than one year but which may extend to seven years and with fine which shall not be less than five thousand rupees but which may extend to fifty thousand rupees”, as punishment for violations.
- The law is to Implemented by the state police with the appointment of vigilance officers under the law at Police Stations.

