

# Need for Anti-superstition And Black Magic Act [UPSC Notes for GS I]

## Need for Anti-superstition And Black Magic Act

### Context

- Murder of anti-superstition activists Narendra Dhabolkar and Govind Pansare
- Prevalence of fake seers and quacks exploiting gullible people are on the rise

### Issues

- In many places in the country, people stay indoors during the solar eclipse as it is considered inauspicious.
- There are many such beliefs regarding black cats, ladders etc that are unscientific and irrational.
- Beliefs that demonize and dehumanize a group of people based on their appearance, color of their skin etc are far more insidious and dangerous.
- We must be cautious against all superstitious beliefs irrespective of the risks that a particular superstitious belief carries.
- This is because it goes against our duty to promote scientific temper ( mentioned in Article 51A(h) in The Constitution Of India “ to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform” ).
- It also makes the individual vulnerable to other dangerous ideas like anti-vaccine propaganda, rumours against vulnerable sections like minorities, etc.
- It also makes people more prone to the effect of fake news thereby impacting the free flow of genuine and verifiable information.
- It is also a matter of great concern that the IPC does not have any specific provisions to tackle this menace.

### Way Forward

- Recently Maharashtra government passed the Maharashtra Prevention and Eradication of Human Sacrifice and Other Inhuman, Evil and Aghori Practices and Black Magic Act, 2013. Similar laws must be passed at the national level by making relevant changes to the IPC.
- In case of fake doctors and quacks / Faith healers in case of injury of the patient due to unscientific treatment, provisions must be made to charge him/her for medical negligence or manslaughter in case of the patient's death.
- Special courses that teach rationalism, critical thinking, tools to identify fake news, etc must be introduced in all schools and colleges. For example, “Satyameva Jayate” scheme by Kannur district administration.
- Tackling superstition through legislations is only half the battle. There is a need to educate the masses using mass media, street plays, social media campaigns. Our conventional education system also must be equipped to tackle the scourge of superstition.