



Aliva: A Data-Driven Approach to Eradicate Child Marriage

For Prelims: Child Marriage, The Hindu Marriage Act 1955, Special Marriage act 1954, Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1993.

For Mains: Initiatives to Eradicate Child Marriage in India.

Why in News?

Recently, **Nayagarh, a district in Odisha**, has adopted a **unique initiative- Aliva to eradicate [child marriage](#)**.

- As per Odisha's child marriage prevention strategy, the State aims to **eradicate child marriage by 2030**.

What are the Key Highlights of the Initiative?

- **About:**
 - The programme was **launched in January, 2022**.
 - **Anganwadi workers** had been asked to **identify every adolescent girl in their jurisdiction** and keep tabs on them.
 - **Details about adolescent girls-** birth registration date, Aadhaar, family details, skill training, etc., are **recorded in registers named - Aliva** available in the Anganwadi centres of the district.
 - The age of the girl is approved by the local school head master, father, supervisor and Child Marriage Prohibition Officer (CMPO).
 - As of now, the district has **registered information of 48,642 adolescent girls in the Aliva registers**.
 - When tipped off about child marriages, **district administration and the police refer to registers for ascertaining proof of girls' age**.
 - The district has **decided to maintain the record for a period of 10 years-2020 to 2030**.
- **Significance:**
 - The **Aliva registers are by far the most comprehensive ones** that keep tabs on girls' lives for 10 years.
 - The register has been **useful for law enforcement agencies, as parents attempt to lie about the age of their girls** to escape punishment.
 - Though the register was conceptualised to prevent child marriages, it has been very **useful for tracking the health of girls especially if they are anaemic**.

What is the Current Status of Child Marriages in India?

- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates suggest that **each year, at least 1.5 million girls under 18 get married in India**, which makes it home to the largest number of child brides in the world - accounting for a third of the global total.

- According to [NFHS-5](#), **23.3% women surveyed got married before attaining the legal age of 18 years**, down from 26.8% reported in NFHS-4. The figure for underage marriage among men is 17.7% (NFHS-5) and 20.3% (NFHS-4).
 - **West Bengal and Bihar**, with around 41% such women each, had the **highest prevalence of girl child marriage**.
- Underage marriages are **lowest in J&K, Lakshadweep, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Goa, Nagaland, Kerala, Puducherry and Tamil Nadu**, according to NHFS-5.
 - The share of **women aged 20-24 who married before turning 18 has declined from 27% to 23%** in the last five years.
 - **The maximum reduction** in the proportion of underage marriages was observed in **Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Haryana**.

What are the Government Laws and Initiatives to Prevent Child Marriage?

- **Minimum Age for Marriage:**
 - For Hindus, [The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955](#), sets **18 years as the minimum age of marriage for the bride and 21 years as the minimum age for the groom**.
 - **In Islam**, the marriage of a minor **who has attained puberty is considered valid**.
 - The [Special Marriage Act, 1954](#) also prescribes **18 and 21 years as the minimum age of consent** for marriage for **women and men respectively**.
- [Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006](#) replaced the **Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929** which was enacted during the British era.
 - It defines a **child to mean a male below 21 years and female below 18 years**.
 - **"Minor"** is defined as a person **who has not attained the age of majority as per the Majority Act**.
 - The **legal status of Child Marriage is voidable if so desired** by one of the parties.
 - However, **if the consent is obtained by fraud**, deceit or if the child is enticed away from his/her lawful guardians, and if the sole purpose is to use the child for trafficking or other immoral purposes, **marriage would be void**.
 - There is also a **provision for maintenance of girl child. Husband is liable to pay maintenance if he is a major**.
 - In case, the **husband is also a minor, his parents would be liable to pay maintenance**.
 - It envisages preventing child marriage with punishments of **rigorous imprisonment for two years and/ or fine of Rs. 1 lakh**.
 - The Act also provides for the **appointment of CPMO whose duties are to prevent child marriages and spread awareness** regarding the same.
- **India's Efforts for Reducing Gender Gap:**
 - India had ratified the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1993](#).
 - **Article 16** of this Convention strictly **forbids child marriage** and asks governments to identify and enforce the minimum marriage age for women.
 - Since 1998, India has had **national legislation exclusively on human rights protections** drafted in consonance with international instruments such as the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948](#).

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. In the context of Indian history, the Rakhmabai case of 1884 revolved around (2020)

1. women's right to gain education
2. age of consent
3. restitution of conjugal rights

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- Rakhmabai (1864 - 1955) made her mark in history due to the legal case she was involved in, which contributed to the enactment of the Age of Consent Act, 1891.
- In 1885, after 12 years of marriage, her husband sought “restitution of conjugal rights”, Rakhmabai was ordered to go live with her husband or spend six months in jail. **Hence, 3 is correct.**
- Rakhmabai refused to live with the man she was married to as a child, as she had no say in the marriage. Rakhmabai wrote to Queen Victoria. The Queen overruled the court’s verdict and dissolved the marriage.
- The ripples that the case created led to the influence on the passage of the Age of Consent Act, 1891, which made child marriages illegal across the British Empire. **Hence, 2 is correct.**
- Though Rakhmabai became the first women doctor to practice medicine in British India, the case was not related to the women’s right to gain education. **Hence, 1 is not correct.**
- **Therefore, option B is the correct answer.**

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