

**“We are what we do repeatedly. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit.  
-Aristotle.”**

**NATIONAL****SUPREME COURT OPENS SABARIMALA TEMPLE TO WOMEN OF ALL AGES**

The Supreme Court in a majority opinion of 4:1 lifted the centuries-old practice of prohibiting women to enter the Lord Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala in Kerala.

The Court condemned the prohibition as hegemonic patriarchy.

The main opinion shared that on one side we pray to goddesses; on the other, women of a certain age are considered ‘impure’.

This dualistic approach is nothing but patriarchy practiced in religion.

It said that exclusion on grounds of biological and physiological features like menstruation was unconstitutional as it was violative of the right to equality and dignity of women.

However the Nair Service Society countered the apex court’s observations about patriarchy.

The prohibition was not based on misogyny but the celibate nature of the deity.

In a concurring opinion, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud held that to treat women as the children of a lesser God was to blink at the Constitution.

The logic behind the ban was that presence of women deviated men from celibacy (brahmacharya).

This was placing the burden of a men’s celibacy on women thus, stigmatizing women and stereotyping them.

Individual dignity of women could not be at the mercy of a mob.

The Sabarimala prohibition was a prejudice against women, which was zealously propagated and was not an essential part of religion.

The majority view declared Rule 3(b) of the Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Act of 1965, which

mandates the prohibition in Sabarimala temple, as ultra vires the Constitution.

The CJ and Justice Khanwilkar held that the Rule violated the fundamental right of a Hindu woman to offer worship at a place of her choice. Right to worship is equally available to men and women.

Justice Indu Malhotra, the lone woman judge on the Constitution Bench, dissented from the majority opinion.

She held that the determination of what constituted an essential practice in a religion should not be decided by judges on the basis of their personal viewpoints.

She held that essentiality of a religious practice or custom had to be decided within the religion. It was a matter of personal faith.

Constitutional morality in a pluralistic society gave freedom to practice even irrational or illogical customs and usages.

Harmonization of fundamental rights with religion included providing freedom for diverse sects to practise their customs and beliefs.

The Judge held that there were strong, plausible reasons to show that Ayyappa devotees had attributes of a religious denomination.

They have distinct names, properties. Besides, the Sabarimala temple was not funded out of the Consolidated Fund.

The Constitution protects religious freedom in two ways

It protects an individual’s right to profess, practise and propagate a religion, and it also assures similar protection to every religious denomination to manage its own affairs

The Supreme Court’s ruling, by a 4:1 majority, that the exclusionary practice violates the rights of women devotees establishes the legal principle that individual freedom prevails over purported group rights, even in matters of religion

The majority held that devotees of Lord Ayyappa do not constitute a separate religious

denomination and that the prohibition on women is not an essential part of Hindu religion

Beyond the legality of the practice, the court has also sought to grapple with the stigmatization of women devotees based on a medieval view of menstruation as symbolizing impurity and pollution

Devotion cannot be subjected to the stereotypes of gender

SC said that stigma built around traditional notions of impurity has no place in the constitutional order, and exclusion based on the notion of impurity is a form of untouchability

### **Way Forward:**

Any rule based on segregation of women pertaining to biological characteristics is indefensible and unconstitutional.

The decision reaffirms the Constitution's transformative character and derives strength from the centrality it accords to fundamental rights.

### **CENTRE TO HIKE GRANT FOR SDRF**

The Centre has increased its contribution in the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) from 75% to 90% with effect from April 1, announced the Union Home Ministry.

Kerala, which has recently faced the worst floods, will be a major beneficiary of the Centre's decision.

Henceforth all States will be required to contribute 10% to the SDRF.

### **State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF):**

The SDRF constituted under Section 48 (1) (a) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, is the primary fund available with State Governments for responses to notified disasters.

The Central Government earlier contributed 75% of SDRF allocation for general category States/UTs and 90% for special category States/UTs (NE States, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir).

The annual Central contribution is released in two equal installments as per the recommendation of the Finance Commission.

SDRF shall be used only for meeting the expenditure for providing immediate relief to the victims.

Disaster (s) covered under SDRF: Cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloudburst, pest attack, frost and cold waves.

Local Disaster: A State Government may use up to 10 percent of the funds available under the SDRF for providing immediate relief to the victims of disasters that they consider to be 'disasters' within the local context.

These are such which are not included in the notified list of disasters of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

### **NITI AAYOG, ORACLE TO FIGHT FAKE DRUGS THROUGH BLOCKCHAIN**

NITI Aayog has signed an agreement with cloud services provider Oracle, hospital chain Apollo Hospitals, and pharmaceutical manufacturer Strides Pharma Sciences.

It aims to curb the distribution of fake drugs using new technologies.

The Indian pharmaceutical industry is the third largest in the world in volume, accounting for 10% of the world's production.

A recent report by World Health Organization estimates 20% of all drugs sold in India are fake.

Also, as the largest producer of generic drugs in the world, India is reported to be the source of 35% of all counterfeit drugs sold worldwide.

The partners will pilot a real drug supply chain using blockchain decentralized ledger and IoT software.

By piloting a real drug supply chain using blockchain and IoT software, they can support governments and healthcare experts to quickly detect fake drugs.

These will aid authorities to enforce penalties on wrong-doers with easy, proof-based data.

Oracle’s blockchain software permanently registers a drug’s record in the manufacturer’s drug supply chain (serial number, labelling, scanning), leaving no scope for record tampering.

The company added that at every point of hand change, it records the drug’s movement — from manufacturer to logistics, from stockist to hospital, or from pharmacy to consumer.

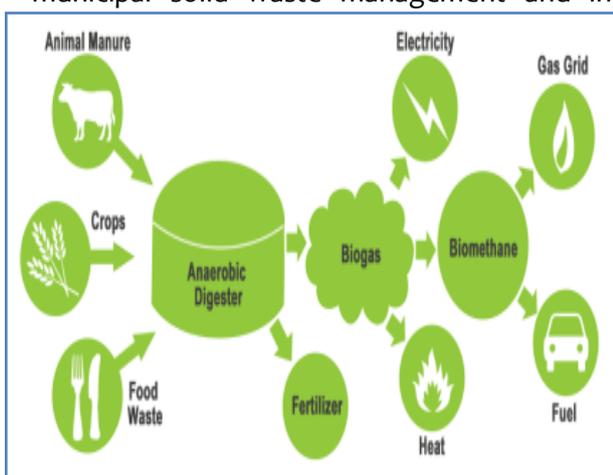
In case of a fake drug, the software will detect irregularity and notify the concerned nodal point.

**SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE TOWARDS AFFORDABLE TRANSPORTATION (SATAT)**

Union Petroleum Minister has launched an innovative initiative to set up Compressed Bio-Gas (CBG) production plants and make available CBG in the market for use in automotive fuels.

This move has the potential to boost availability of more affordable transport fuels, better use of agricultural residue, cattle dung and municipal solid waste, as well as to provide an additional revenue source to farmers.

The initiative holds great promise for efficient municipal solid waste management and in



tackling the problem of polluted urban air due to farm stubble-burning and carbon emissions.

Use of CBG will also help bring down dependency on crude oil imports.

**Benefits of the initiative:**

There are multiple benefits from converting agricultural residue, cattle dung and municipal solid waste into CBG on a commercial scale:

- Responsible waste management, reduction in carbon emissions and pollution
- Additional revenue source for farmers
- Boost to entrepreneurship, rural economy and employment
- Support to national commitments in achieving climate change goals
- Reduction in import of natural gas and crude oil
- Buffer against crude oil/gas price fluctuations

**MOHUA PARTNERS WITH GOOGLE TO LAUNCH #LOOREVIEW CAMPAIGN**

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, under the aegis of Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban has partnered with Google to launch the Loo Review campaign.

It is aimed to encourage all local guides in India to rate and review public toilets on Google Maps.

This campaign will allow all citizens to locate public toilets in their cities on Google Maps, Search and the Assistant and also provide feedback on the same.

500+ cities in India with more than 30,000 toilets with the name of “SBM Toilet” are currently live on Google Maps.

The joint campaign to be run throughout October and November 2018 is an effort to increase the awareness and ease of locating public toilets across India.

Local Guides are people who share reviews, photos, and knowledge on Google Maps to help people explore the world.

One of the objectives of the SBM- U is to provide sanitation coverage through public toilet facilities across cities in India for achieving Open Defecation Free (ODF) status.

There is now a need to ensure that the ODF status is sustained through continuous usage and proper maintenance of public toilets.

The 'Public toilets near me' feature will benefit citizens, particularly women and senior citizens, who often find it difficult to find access to clean toilets in the public space.

The feedback provide by local guides through the Loo Review campaign will press upon the Urban Local Bodies to take proactive steps to improve public toilet facilities across the country.

#### **MDR REIMBURSEMENT PENDING FROM BANKS**

The Payments Council of India (PCI) has said that reimbursement of merchant discount rates from banks to service providers and merchant aggregators are yet to be received.

**MDR** is the fee that a merchant has to pay to a bank for every transaction that is split between the bank which issued the card, the payment service providers, and payment gateways (PayUbiz and PayUMoney)

**Payment Service Provider** – A payment service provider (PSP) offers online services for accepting credit card, debit card, online banking payments

In December 2017, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, had said that MDR would be reimbursed by the government on transactions up to Rs.2000.

It is applicable on transactions made through debit cards, BHIM UPI or Aadhaar enabled payment systems.

#### **Payment Council of India:**

PCI is an apex non-governmental body representing companies in payments and settlement system.

It was formed in 2013 under aegis of IMAI (Internet and Mobile Association of India) to cater needs of digital payment industry in India

Ambiguity over reimbursement will impact the operating ability of merchant aggregators and erode the efforts to promote digital payments.