

SOCIETY

❖ **The petitions around same sex marriage**

➤ **CONTEXT:** On April 18, 2023 a five-judge Supreme Court Bench, headed by the Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, is scheduled to hear a series of petitions seeking legal recognition of same sex marriage even as a host of statutory organisations, religious bodies and NGOs have rushed to court seeking an opportunity to be heard.

- Their submissions touch upon various issues from the definition of “marriage” to the “psychological impact” growing up with two men or two women as parents would have on children.
- While some have cautioned judges that Indian society is not ready to accept same sex marriage others have linked it to sexual liberation movements in western countries.

➤ **The various petitions**

- The petitioner, argue that the non-recognition of same sex marriage amounted to discrimination that struck at the root of dignity and self-fulfillment of LGBTQIA+ couples and reminded the court that LGBTQ+ citizens form 7 to 8% of the population of the country.
- The petitioners point out that the legal protection available in about 15 legislations guaranteeing the right of wages, gratuity, adoption, surrogacy, etc, were not available to LGBTQIA+ citizens.
- In a related vein, According to the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) that same sex couples would make equally good parents as heterosexual parents. By depriving legal status to homosexual marriages, the state is denying the legal security of dual parenthood and guardianship to the child.
 - ✓ Since the Netherlands’ legalisation of same-sex marriages in 2000, over 34 countries have legalised same-sex marriages either through legislation or through court decisions.
 - ✓ At present more than 50 countries allow same-sex couples to legally adopt children.
 - ✓ A 2020 study that academic results of children raised by same-sex parents from birth outperformed children with heterosexual parents.

➤ **The stand of the government**

- According to Union government the idea of same sex marriage is merely an “urban elitist view”.
- ✓ The judicial creation of a “new social institution” like same sex marriage cannot be claimed as a matter of right.
- ✓ It is the Parliament and not the courts that have to decide on same sex marriages, which is a threat to the “holo union” of marriage between a biological man and woman in India.
- The State of Madhya Pradesh has also sought to intervene in the case, saying it was a “necessary stakeholder”. It said the legal recognition of same sex marriage would “seriously affect” the interests of the residents of Madhya Pradesh.
 - Additionally, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), unlike its Delhi counterpart, argued that same sex marriage would violate the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act.
 - ✓ The Juvenile Justice Act of 2015 prohibits a single man, let alone two men, from adopting a girl child.
 - ✓ The NCPCR highlighted a study by the Catholic University of America which said that the emotional problems suffered by children of same sex couples were twice more than of children living with heterogenous parents.
 - ✓ It said a “proper legislative system needs to be adopted regarding same sex couples”.

➤ **Religious bodies and NGOs Arguments**

- The Shri Sanatam Dharm Pratinidhi Sabha opined that the concept of same-sex marriages is “catastrophic” and that it would have a “pernicious effect” on Indian culture and society. The body quotes the Vedas, saying “those who have wives truly have a family life; those who have wives can be happy; those who have wives can have a full life”. It refers to stanzas from the Manusmriti that state “to be mothers were women created, and to be fathers, men”.
- The Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind also opposed same-sex marriage by stating that marriage between opposite sexes is like the ‘basic feature’ of marriage. “Islam’s prohibition of homosexuality has been categorical from the dawn of the religion of Islam itself. LGBTQIA+ movement dates back to the western sexual liberation movement.”
- Similarly the Telangana Markazi Shia Ulema Council also claimed that persons raised by same-sex couples were “much more likely” to suffer from depression, low academic achievement, unemployment and are more likely to smoke marijuana etc.
- ✓ It said that in the “West/Global North”, religion has largely ceased to be a source of law and plays very little role in public life. On the other hand, religion plays an instrumental role in shaping personal law, along with social norms and family ties in India.
- Additionally, the Akhil Bhartiya Sant Samiti said to “keep husband and wife together is the law of nature. ‘Kanyadan’ and ‘Saptapadi’ have basic importance in Hindu marriages.” The reiterated that same sex marriage is “totally unnatural”.
- Bringing in a different angle, the Kanchan Foundation has submitted that deep-seated stereotypes and mental barriers that have been constructed over centuries cannot be dismantled by a mere judicial ruling. It says that Indian society requires more time to be sensitised in order to accept same sex unions and understand their impact on society.

- The Call for Justice NGO argues that “marriage flows from natural law” and the “millennia-old institution” of marriage between a man and a woman is recognised across the world. Any amendments in the institution of marriage “must flow from popular will as expressed through the legislature”.
- **What are the Arguments in Favour of Same Sex Marriage?**
- Equal Rights and Protection Under the Law: All individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation, have the right to marry and form a family.
- ✓ Same-sex couples should have the same legal rights and protections as opposite-sex couples.
- ✓ Non-recognition of same-sex marriage amounted to discrimination that struck at the root of the dignity and self-fulfillment of LBTQIA+ couples.
- Strengthening Families and Communities: Marriage provides social and economic benefits to couples and their families. Allowing same-sex couples to marry strengthens families and communities by promoting stability and security.
- Global Acceptance: Same-sex marriage is legal in many countries around the world, and denying this right to individuals in a democratic society goes against the global principles.
- ✓ In 133 countries homosexuality decriminalised, but only in 32 of them same-sex marriage is legal. Countries legalised same sex marriage:

Where same-sex couples can legally marry (Dec 2021)



➤ Way Forward

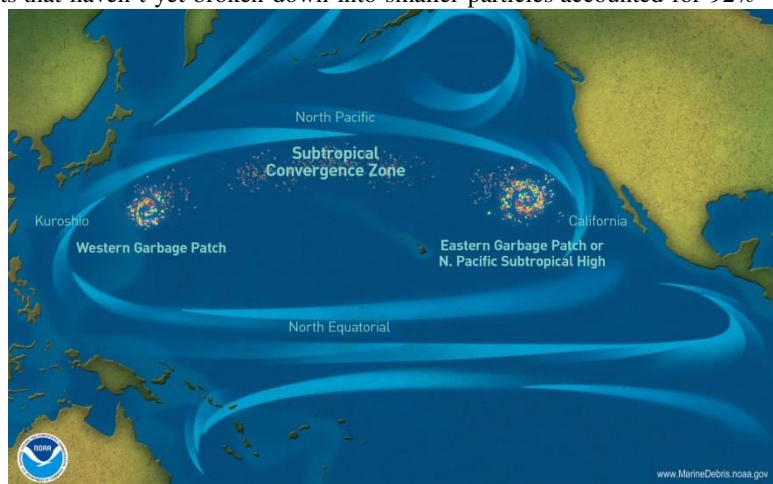
- Cultural Sensitivity: India is a culturally diverse country with different religious and societal values.
- ✓ Any legislative or judicial decision on same-sex marriage must consider the cultural sensitivities of different communities while also ensuring that the fundamental rights of individuals are protected.
- Social Acceptance and Education: India still has a long way to go in terms of social acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community.
- ✓ Education and awareness campaigns should be developed to promote acceptance and understanding of heterosexuality then same-sex marriages should be considered on table.
- International Obligations: India is a signatory to various international human rights treaties and conventions, which require it to protect the rights of all individuals, including the LGBTQ+ community.
- ✓ As many other countries such as Canada, the United States, and Australia have recognized same-sex marriage, it is imperative that India legalizes it to ensure equal rights and opportunities for all individuals regardless of their sexual orientation.

ENVIRONMENT

❖ How coastal species are living on plastic debris in the ocean

- **CONTEXT: The Anthropocene epoch - This is the name some scientists have proposed for a new period in history characterised by the influence of one species on the planet’s geology, ecosystems and even its fate — none other than Homo sapiens.**
- The North Pacific Subtropical Gyre (NPSG) have a long east-west strip where some of the debris of plastics in these currents has collected over the years.
- The eastern part of this is the Great Pacific Garbage Patch.
- ✓ It is, per one estimate, 1.6 million sq. km big and more than 50 years old.

- ✓ It contains an estimated 45,000-1,29,000 metric tonnes of plastic, predominantly in the form of microplastics.
- ✓ Mass-wise, heavier, more visible objects that haven't yet broken down into smaller particles accounted for 92% of the plastics in 2018.
- Contribution of the Tsunami:
 - The tsunami off the Japanese coast in 2011 contributed to the debris in this garbage patch.
 - Until at least 2017, researchers had found debris washing ashore on the West coast of North America containing live lifeforms originally found in Japan.
 - Researchers reported that 98% of the debris items had invertebrate organisms.
 - They also found that pelagic species (species of the open ocean) were present on 94.3% of them and coastal species on 70.5%.
- That is, organisms found on coasts were getting by on small floating islands of garbage (to humans) out in the Pacific Ocean.
- The number of coastal species such as arthropods and molluscs identified rafting on plastic was over three-times greater than that of pelagic species that normally live in the open ocean. In all, they found organisms belonging to 46 taxa. While 37 of them were coastal, the rest were pelagic.
 - ✓ Pelagic means relating to or living in areas of the sea away from the land
- Among both coastal and pelagic organisms, crustaceans were the most common.
- Nearly all taxa were of Northwest Pacific origin, including Japan.
- **The relevance of the findings**
 - A new community: The introduction of a vast sea of relatively permanent anthropogenic rafts since the 1950s has given rise to a new kind of standing coastal community in the open ocean. Researchers have named it the neipelagic community.
 - A new settlement: While coastal species have been found on human-made objects in the open ocean before, they were always considered to have been "misplaced" from their intended habitats. The neipelagic community, on the other hand, is not misplaced but lives on plastic items in the garbage patch, including reproducing there.
 - Bonding of plastics with nature: Polyethylene films had chemically bonded with rocks in China. Anthroquinones of Brazil (sedimentary rocks embedded with plastic earrings) The "plastiglomerates" of Hawai'i (beach sediment + organic debris + basaltic lava + melted plastic).



PRELIMS

1. National Panchayat Awards

- **CONTEXT: The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu presented the National Panchayat Awards and inaugurated the National Conference on Incentivization of Panchayats in New Delhi.**
- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is celebrates National Panchayat Awards Week from 17th to 21st April, 2023, as part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM) 2.0, leading up to National Panchayati Raj Day on 24th April, 2023.
- In order to commemorate this occasion in a meaningful manner and to align with the AKAM 2.0 guidelines of taking a "whole-of-society" and "whole-of-government" approach, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has developed a series of Thematic Conferences centered around the theme "Panchayaton ke Sankalpon ki Siddhi ka Utsav" to increase the reach of AKAM 2.0 and positively impact the lives of all Indians.
- **About the Award**
 - The National Panchayat Awards honour the best-performing panchayats (local self-government bodies) across the country by assessing their performance in attainment of SDGs. The awards were first instituted in 2011 and have since been held every year.
 - The Awardee Panchayats under various categories of National Panchayat Awards–2023 namely,
 - ✓ **Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar (DDUPSVP)** for the performance under individual LSDG themes
 - ✓ **Nanaji Deshmukh Sarvottam Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar (NDSPSVP)** for the aggregate performance under all 9 LSDG themes and green initiative related Special Categories
 - ✓ **Gram Urja Swaraj Vishesh Panchayat Puraskar**
 - ✓ **Carbon Neutral Vishesh Panchayat Puraskar** were felicitated by the dignitaries and the award money was transferred digitally to the Awardee Panchayats on this occasion.
- **Other developments Highlighted by the ministry**

- The youngest Panchayats in Jammu & Kashmir UT have made commendable efforts towards the goal of achieving Carbon Neutrality by the year 2030.
- Under the SVAMITVA Scheme, Drone Survey has been completed in more than 2.35 lakh villages whereas 6.57 lakh villages, viz 95% of 6.62 lakh villages have been provided with Bhu-Aadhaar under Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN) project.
- A mobile application the GS NIRNAY, National Initiative for Rural India to Navigate, Innovate and Resolve Panchayat decisions was launched by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, a significant step towards realizing the vision of 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance' at the grassroots level, and is expected to accelerate the pace of rural transformation to achieve the vision of Gram Swaraj laid down by Mahatma Gandhi.

2. **IN-SPACE (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre)**

➤ **CONTEXT: Dr Jitendra Singh while addressing G20 meeting said that a nodal entity called Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Center IN-SPACE has been created towards promoting and authorising private industries participation.**

- To facilitate private sector participation, the government has created the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACE), in June 2020, as a single-window, independent, nodal agency which functions as an autonomous agency in Department of Space (DOS).
- Established as a single window agency for all space sector activities of private entities, IN-SPACE plays an important role in boosting the private space sector economy in India.
- IN-SPACE, is responsible to promote, enable authorize and supervise various space activities of the NGEs (Non-Governmental Entities) that include, among others, the building of launch vehicles & satellites and providing space-based services; sharing of space infrastructure and premises under the control of DOS/ISRO; and establishment of new space infrastructure and facilities.
- It is meant to act as “the agency to promote, handhold and authorise private sector activities in the sector, besides enabling sharing of technical facilities and expertise from ISRO”.
- In-SPACE had signed MoUs with 13 such start-ups and would soon sign with four more. In-SPACE planned to open incubation centres in India, which would help start-ups access funds and legal advice.

➤ **Space industry in India:**

- India's space programme is one of the most well-developed in the world and is driven by a state-owned agency—the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- The global space industry in 2021 was valued at \$469 billion, (set to grow to \$1 trillion by 2040), but India's share was only 2 per cent (\$10 billion).
- Currently, India constitutes 2-3% of the global space economy and is expected to enhance its share to >10% by 2030 at a CAGR of 48%.
- In the global space market, rocket and satellite launch services—an area in which ISRO specialises—amount to only 5% share. This segment requires robust infrastructure and heavy investments. Satellite-based services and ground-based systems account for the remaining 95%.
- At present, the government drives a certain level of participation by the Indian private sector, primarily in the rocket and satellite launch services segment. However, enhanced private sector participation will be necessary to penetrate satellite-based services and ground-based system segments.

3. **Global Buddhist Summit**

➤ **CONTEXT: PM Shri Narendra Modi will inaugurate first Global Buddhist Summit on 20th April in New Delhi.**

- The Ministry of Culture in collaboration with its grantee body International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) will be hosting the Global Buddhist Summit (GBS) on 20-21 April
- For the first time prominent Buddhist monks from various countries will visit India and take part in the Summit.
- In the summit discussions will be held on how to deal with contemporary challenges, with the help of Buddhist Philosophy and thought.
- This global Summit will mark the significance and importance of India in Buddhism, as Buddhism was born in India.
- The theme of the two- day Global Buddhist Summit is “**Responses to Contemporary Challenges : Philosophy to Praxis**”.
- The discussions will fall under the following four themes:
 - ✓ Buddha Dhamma and Peace
 - ✓ Buddha Dhamma: Environmental Crisis, Health and Sustainability
 - ✓ Preservation of Nalanda Buddhist Tradition
 - ✓ Buddha Dhamma Pilgrimage, Living heritage and Buddha Relics: a resilient foundation to India's centuries-old cultural links to countries in South, Southeast and East Asia.
- The prime vision of the Summit is to look into the teachings of the Shakyamuni Buddha that have been continuously enriched over the centuries with the practice of Buddha Dhamma.

- The aim is to set up a forum for the lay Buddhist scholars and Dharma Masters. It will also delve into Buddha's message for Peace, Compassion and Harmony with the objective of working towards Universal Peace and Harmony, in accordance with the core values of Dharma and produce a document for further academic research, to study its viability for use as a tool for the conduct of international relations on the global stage.
- The Ministry of Culture alongwith the IBC, recently held a successful international meet of experts from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) nations on Shared Buddhist Heritage in order to re-establish trans-cultural links, seek out commonalities, between Buddhist art of Central Asia, art styles, archaeological sites and antiquity in various museums' collections of the SCO countries.
- The GBS-2023 is a similar effort towards engaging the global Buddhist dharma leadership and scholars on matters of Buddhist and universal concerns, and to come up with policy inputs to address them collectively.

ANSWER WRITTING

Q. The cooperative sector has played a significant role in India's economic development, particularly in agriculture and rural sectors. What is the potential of cooperatives in promoting inclusive growth and social welfare? What are the challenges in creating a sustainable and transparent cooperative system? Analyse.

According to ILO, a cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.

- Cooperatives are autonomous organizations formed by individuals who voluntarily come together to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations.
- Cooperatives operate on the principle of democratic control and are owned and managed by their members, who share the benefits and risks of their activities.

The potential of cooperatives in promoting inclusive growth and social welfare is significant and can be seen in the following ways:

- **Employment Generation:** Cooperatives can create employment opportunities in areas where traditional employment opportunities are limited. Cooperatives provide jobs for their members and their families, and often employ people from disadvantaged communities, women, and youth.
- **Poverty Reduction:** Cooperatives can contribute to poverty reduction by providing members with access to credit, training, and other resources that enable them to start or expand their own businesses. Cooperatives can also provide affordable goods and services to their members, such as healthcare, housing, and education.
- **Social-Welfare:** Cooperatives promote social welfare by providing members with a sense of community and belonging. Members work together to achieve common goals and share the benefits of their collective efforts. Cooperatives also promote social responsibility by supporting community development projects and by practicing ethical and sustainable business practices.
- **Financial Inclusion:** Cooperatives can provide financial services to people who are excluded from the formal banking system. Cooperatives offer a range of financial services, including savings, loans, and insurance, that enable members to meet their financial needs and build assets over time.
- **Empowerment:** Cooperatives empower members by giving them a voice in decision-making and by promoting democratic control. Members have equal voting rights and participate in the management of the cooperative, which enhances their leadership skills and promotes civic engagement.
- **Creating a sustainable and transparent cooperative system in India faces several challenges, including:**
 - **Weak regulatory framework:** The regulatory framework for cooperatives in India is weak and outdated. This makes it difficult to monitor and enforce compliance with regulations, and leaves room for fraud and mismanagement.
 - **Lack of transparency:** Many cooperatives in India suffer from a lack of transparency in their operations and management. This makes it difficult for members to hold their leaders accountable and can lead to corruption and abuse of power.
 - **Limited access to capital:** Cooperatives often struggle to raise capital due to limited access to financial institutions and a lack of collateral. This makes it difficult for them to invest in new projects and expand their operations.
 - **Political interference:** Many cooperatives in India are influenced by political parties, which can undermine their autonomy and lead to corruption.
 - **Inadequate training and education:** Many members and leaders of cooperatives lack the necessary training and education to manage their organizations effectively. This can lead to mismanagement and a lack of accountability.

Conclusion

Addressing these challenges will require significant reforms in the legal and regulatory framework for cooperatives, as well as efforts to improve transparency and accountability. Additionally, providing better access to capital and training and education for cooperative members and leaders can help to promote their success and sustainability.

MCQs

1. Consider the following statements with reference legal recognition of Same Sex Marriage across the world
 1. South Africa is the only African country which legalised the same sex marriage.
 2. Taiwan is the only Asian country which legalised the same.

3. Finland is the first country in the world which recognised it legally.
Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?
a) **1 and 2 only** b) 2 and 3 only c) 1 and 3 only d) 1,2 and 3
2. With reference to ULPIN (Unified Land Parcel Identification Number) project consider the following statement
1. ULPIN is a part of the Digital India Land Record Modernisation Programme (DILRMP), which aims to modernize land records in India through the use of technology.
2. It assigns a unique 14-digit alphanumeric code to each land parcel
Which of the above statement/s is/ are correct?
a) 1 only b) 2 only c) **Both 1 and 2** d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. Consider the statement in regard to the SVAMITVA scheme.
1. The aim of this scheme is to update rural land records, providing a record of rights to village households and issue property cards.
2. SVAMITVA is a central scheme of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development.
3. This scheme to be implemented across the country in a phased manner over a period of six years (2020-2026).
Select the correct statement/s by using the code mentioned below.
a) **1 and 2 only** b) 2 and 3 only c) 1 and 3 only d) 1,2 and 3
4. "GS NIRNAY" a mobile application recently launched by which of the following Ministry?
a) Ministry of Urban and Housing Affairs
b) Ministry of Rural Development
c) Ministry of Social Justice
d) **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**
5. Consider the following statements
1. The Ministry of Culture in collaboration International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) hosted the Global Buddhist Summit (GBS) 2023.
2. International Buddhist Confederation headquarter is situated in Bhutan.
3. The theme of the GBS-23 is "Responses to Contemporary Challenges: Philosophy to Praxis",
Which of the above statement is/are correct?
a) 1 and 2 only b) 2 and 3 only c) **1 and 3 only** d) 1,2 and 3
6. With reference to IN-SPACe, consider the following statements:
1. It is formed following the Space sector reforms to enable and facilitate the participation of private players.
2. The agency acts as an interface between ISRO and Non-Governmental Entities (NGEs)
3. Indian Space Association (IsPA) works under administrative control of IN-SPACe.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) **1 and 2 only** b) 2 and 3 only c) 1 and 3 only d) 1,2 and 3
7. Consider the following statements with reference to Mining and Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act 1948
1. Indian Bureau of Mines was established under the Act
2. Under the act State governments are empowered to make rules for preventing illegal mining, transportation and storage of minerals.
3. It is responsibility of the State governments to establish the correct grade of mineral being dispatched and change action premium, royalty and other payments on the correct grade of mineral.
Which of the above statement/s is/are not correct?
a) **1 only** b) 1 and 3 only c) 2 only d) 2 and 3 only
8. A national conference called "Srijana" often mentioned in news is related to which of the following?
a) **Female Infertility**
b) Self Help Group
c) Immunity therapy for cancer
d) Vaccine drive for Anaemia
9. YUVA PORTAL recently released by which of the following Ministry?
a) Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
b) Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises
c) Ministry of Finance
d) **Ministry of Science and Technology**
10. Consider the following statements about Landlord Port:
1. The port authority acts as a regulatory body while the operations on the port are carried out by private companies.
2. Jawaharlal Nehru Port of Mumbai is the first 100 per cent landlord major port.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
a) 1 only b) 2 only c) **Both 1 and 2** d) Neither 1 nor 2