

AS INTRODUCED IN THE RAJYA SABHA
ON THE 5TH DECEMBER, 2025

Bill No. XLIV of 2024

THE CRIMINAL LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2024

A
BILL

to amend the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023.

BE it enacted by Parliament in the Seventy-fifth Year of the Republic of India as follows: —

CHAPTER I PRELIMINARY

5 1. (1) This Act may be called the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Act 2024.

Short title and
commencement.

(2) It shall come into force on such date, as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint.

CHAPTER II

AMENDMENT TO THE BHARATIYA NYAYA SANHITA, 2023

Amendment of
section 299.

2. In Chapter XVI of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, after section 299, the following new section shall be inserted, namely: —

45 of 2023.

Sacrilege of
religious texts.

“299A. Whoever damages, destroys or defiles any religious text, revered by any religious community in India, including but not limited to ‘Sri Guru Granth Sahib’, ‘Srimad Bhagwad Geeta’, ‘Holy Quran’ and ‘Holy Bible’, with the deliberate and malicious intention of hurting the religious feelings of that community, shall be guilty of sacrilege and shall be punished with imprisonment for a term not less than seven years but which may extend to imprisonment for life.”

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Amendment of
section 346.

3. In Chapter XXVI of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023, in section 346, after sub-section (1), for the existing proviso, the following shall be substituted, namely: —

46 of 2023.

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“Provided that when the inquiry or trial relates to an offence under section 64, section 65, section 66, section 67, section 68, section 70, section 71 or section 299A of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, the inquiry or trial shall be completed within a period of two months from the date of filing of the chargesheet.”

45 of 2023.

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STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

Sacred religious texts are sacrosanct to every religion in India and we have witnessed increase in cases of sacrilege of religious texts across the country due to insufficient punishment to deter such a heinous crime which can lead to law and order issues. The importance and sensitivity of our religious texts can be ascertained from the fact that the sacred Guru Granth Sahib Ji is considered living guru by Sikhs and is accorded respect accordingly.

The State of Punjab has witnessed several cases of sacrilege and in order to deal with such a sensitive issue, the Punjab Assembly, in 2018, had unanimously passed the Indian Penal Code (Punjab Amendment) Bill, 2018 and the Code of Criminal Procedure (Punjab Amendment) Bill 2018, which stipulated punishment upto life imprisonment for injury, damage or sacrilege to Guru Granth Sahib, Bhagwat Gita, Holy Quran and Holy Bible with the intention to hurt the religious feelings of the people. The Bill is currently under consideration of the Hon'ble President.

The Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 proposes to add Section 299A to the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 to make “sacrilege of religious texts such as Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Srimad Bhagwad Geeta, Holy Quran and Holy Bible with the intention to hurt the religious feelings of the people”, a crime punishable with a maximum punishment of life imprisonment.

The proposed penal provision is based on the premise that such sacrilege leads to enormous hurt to religious sentiments of the people, causes disruption of public order and disturbs communal harmony, which the State has a duty to maintain. This Bill is a major step towards curbing such incidents of sacrilege and maintaining communal harmony in the country.

This Bill is a *sine qua non* for a diverse country like India wherein, several cases of sacrilege have been reported across the States and the same have been used to invoke communal tensions and therefore, in order to maintain communal harmony across the country, it is necessary that rigorous punishment is given to deter criminals trying to disturb communal harmony.

The quantum of punishment for sacrilege is inadequate under the existing laws and therefore, this Bill seeks to create deterrence for any kind of sacrilege by prescribing a minimum punishment of seven years and a maximum punishment of life imprisonment.

Hence, this Bill.

RAGHAV CHADHA.

ANNEXURE

EXTRACTS FROM THE BHARATIYA NYAYA SANHITA, 2023

(45 OF 2023)

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299. Whoever, with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class of citizens of India, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs or by visible representations or through electronic means or otherwise, insults or attempts to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of that class, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.

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Deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs.

EXTRACTS FROM THE BHARATIYA NAGARIK SURAKSHA SANHITA 2023

(46 OF 2023)

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346. (1) In every inquiry or trial the proceedings shall be continued from day-to-day basis until all the witnesses in attendance have been examined, unless the Court finds the adjournment of the same beyond the following day to be necessary for reasons to be recorded:

Provided that when the inquiry or trial relates to an offence under section 64, section 65, section 66, section 67, section 68, section 70 or section 71 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 the inquiry or trial shall be completed within a period of two months from the date of filing of the chargesheet.

Power to postpone or adjourn proceedings.

45 of 2023.

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RAJYA SABHA

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BILL

*to amend the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 and the
Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023.*

(Shri Raghav Chadha, M.P.)