

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT
LOK SABHA**

**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. †4857
TO BE ANSWERED ON 23.07.2019**

ERADICATION OF SUPERSTITIONS AND SOCIAL EVILS

†4857. SHRI ASHOK MAHADEORAO NETE:

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has taken any steps for the eradication of superstitions and other social evils prevailing in the country; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

**MINISTER OF STATE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT
(SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE)**

(a) & (b): As the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is concerned with a few of the social evils the answer is limited to these. 'Untouchability' construed as a social evil in the historical perspective, emanating generally from caste based prejudices, was abolished by Article 17 of the Constitution of India and any disability arising out of its practice was made an offence in accordance with the law. Accordingly, an Act of Parliament namely the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 was enacted which prescribed punishment for specified offences of 'untouchability'. Subsequently, another Act of Parliament namely the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes(Prevention of Atrocities){PoA} Act,1989 was enacted to prevent commission of offences against members of Scheduled Castes(SCs) and Scheduled Tribes(STs). The PoA Act as amended in the year 2015, made superstitious practice of dedicating a SC or a ST woman to a deity, religious institution etc. as a 'Devadasi', a punishable offence. Likewise, causing physical harm or mental agony to a member of a SC or a ST, on the allegation of practicing witchcraft or being a witch, a superstitious practice, was also made a punishable offence under the PoA Act, as amended. Further, to promote social integration and harmony, the Ministry has a Centrally Sponsored Scheme which provides Central assistance to State Governments/UT Administrations, inter-alia, towards incentive for inter-caste marriages where one of the spouses is a member of a Scheduled Caste.
