



# CHILD MARRIAGE VIOLATES A GIRL'S RIGHTS TO LIFE, HEALTH, EQUALITY & FREE CHOICE.

Marriage of a **girl under the age of 18** or a **boy under the age of 21** is prohibited under the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA).**

## CHILD MARRIAGE ENDANGERS GIRLS' LIVES AND HEALTH.

Girls in child marriages are at higher risk of physical, mental, and sexual violence: married girls under 18 are three times as likely to experience marital rape and twice as likely to be beaten, slapped, or threatened by their husbands than older married women.

Girls are likely to be removed from school after child marriage.

Pregnancy is the leading cause of death for girls aged 15–19. Adolescent girls are twice as likely to die in pregnancy than women over the age of 20.

## CHILD MARRIAGE VIOLATES A GIRL'S CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS TO:

### ARTICLE 21

Life, which includes rights to dignity; autonomy; health and reproductive rights; and freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment

### ARTICLE 21-A

Free education up to 14 years of age

### ARTICLES 14 AND 15

Equality and non-discrimination

### ARTICLE 21 WITH ARTICLES 14 AND 19

Privacy, which includes the protection of personal intimacies and choice in marriage, procreation, and motherhood

Married girls have the right to go to court to get their child marriage declared invalid under the PCMA before the age of 20. In Karnataka, any child marriage solemnised after April 2017 is automatically considered invalid.

Maintenance, residence, child custody, and the return of ornaments, valuables, and gifts received at the time of marriage are other reliefs that women and girls married as children can request from the court under the PCMA.

Child marriage is linked to domestic violence. A woman or girl married as a child and facing abuse may seek relief, including protection orders to stop the violence, under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

Anyone who solemnises, promotes, or participates in child marriage can be punished under the PCMA. No woman or girl can be punished with imprisonment under the law.

Child Marriage Prohibition Officers, appointed by state governments, have the responsibility to stop child marriages and support married girls seeking legal remedies.

## TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGE

Call the **CHILDLINE** helpline (1098) or contact a **Child Marriage Prohibition Officer**

For legal assistance concerning child marriage contact:

**Centre for Law and Policy Research**

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35 Primrose Road  
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### Independent Thought v. Union of India (2017)

On October 11, 2017, the Supreme Court of India recognised every girl's right to bodily integrity and declared forced sexual intercourse with a wife under the age of 18 as rape. The Court recognised that child marriage denies girls equality in all aspects of their lives, including their health, education, and economic self-sufficiency, and is a violation of their rights.

*"The girl child must not be deprived of her right of choice."*

JUSTICES MADAN B. LOKUR AND DEEPAK GUPTA