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THE UNIFORM CIVIL CODE IN INDIA: A SHIFT FROM RELIGIOUS INDENTITY TO EQUALITY AND CONSTITUTIONALISM

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ABSTRACT

Human Rights refer to the rights that every individual has simply by being human regardless of nationality, gender, religion, language, culture, or social status. They are based on the concept of equality; no one person is above or beneath another person before the law and society. This paper examines how the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) has repeatedly caught-up in debates of religion, identity politics, cultural sovereignty, and personal law in India. Rather than being an argument about a constitutional right that would provide equality and human dignity, UCC often gets viewed as an issue of government intervention/hands-off religion. Incessant attempts to turn UCC into an issue of religion generates resistance, confusion and sociopolitical friction that make reasoned conversation about the substantive intent of UCC impossible. More than 75 years since gaining independence, the debate about the lack of a Uniform Civil Code is still alive in the nation. India's patriarchal traditions, upheld and continued through various personal laws, have in-operated gender inequalities in regard to marriage, divorce, guardianship, maintenance, and inheritance. In many religions, masculinity has been normalized to the point of custom, preventing women from enjoying the same degrees of legal standing as men. Importantly, the Constitution's framers did not understand the UCC as being 'anti-religion' or a religious 'inference' in the same way as their numerous references to religion. Instead, the UCC is intended to develop a common law framework of civil rights for all, replete with equality, justice, and dignity for every citizen regardless of sex, religious identity, cultural norms or social status. The object of the UCC is not to eliminate cultural identities but to promote constitutional morality over social morality. It intends to harmonize personal laws and human rights principles in accordance with Articles 14 (Right to Equality) and 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty). Numerous countries worldwide, regardless of cultural or religious differences, have adopted uniform civil laws that have facilitated equal treatment of all genders and greater protection of individual freedoms. This paper analyzes the extent to which connecting UCC with religion reduces its value from a human rights

perspective, and examines the extent to which women experience discrimination stemming from personal law inequalities. The paper ultimately concludes that the UCC is an instrument of equality- not a threat to religious liberty.

Keywords: Human Rights, Uniform Civil Code (UCC), Gender Equality, Patriarchy, Personal Laws, Secularism, Constitutional Morality

I. INTRODUCTION

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) refers to a proposed common set of civil laws which aim to apply across all citizens of India without any distinction of religion, caste, gender or community. The UCC aims to address personal matters like marriage, divorce, inheritance, maintenance and adoption under one legislative regime. The Constitution of India has a well-developed framework for Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles for attitude of the State, most of which exhibit principles of a humane society seen out of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This constitutional arrangement reflects that human rights are central to the Indian legal system and weave itself into the constitutional ethos and fabric of the law.

As a nation, India has enormous religious, cultural and linguistic diversity. With various communities following their personal laws derived from customary laws, scriptures and traditions of the respective communities, it becomes an uphill task to engender a sense of unity, fraternity and national integration. However, the Constitution contains provisions to protect, uphold and promote human dignity, equality and justice thus, few steps India's commitment to human rights. India is also declared as a secular state by the Constitution. The term "secular" in India means that State does not have a religion, and no citizen should be discriminated against on the basis of religion. Articles 25–28 grant freedom of religion and every person has the right to "profess, practice and propagate religion" provided it is confined to public order, morality, and health. It is worth noting that this freedom is not absolute and it cannot be exercised in a manner that infringes on the rights and freedom of others.

While the Preamble to the Constitution encapsulates the ideals of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity, certain personal laws continue to carry through inequality, notably discrimination based on gender. The accommodation of these personal laws creates tension between these religious traditions and the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution is exemplified

in the case *Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala* (2018)¹, which is also known as the Sabarimala Temple case. In this case the Supreme Court ruled that the custom prohibiting women between the ages of 10–50 years from entering the temple violated Articles 14, 15, 17, 25, and 26 and was therefore unconstitutional. The judgement signaled a priority of constitutional morality over social or religious taboos, especially where they cause discrimination. In this context, Article 44 of the Directive Principles of State Policy states: “The State shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a Uniform Civil Code throughout the territory of India.”² In spite of the constitutional requirement and repeated judicial motivation, India continues to employ plural personal laws, and the UCC continues to be a matter of ongoing legal, political, and social discussions.

II. NATURE OF THE INDIAN SOCIETY

Due to the diverse nature of Indian society—many languages spoken in many states, many religions practiced, and a multitude of cultural traditions—there is an inherent difficulty in administering the country within a legal framework of separate personal laws applicable to each community. These personal laws are based on recognized texts and customs, and they govern important matters of civil life, such as marriage, divorce, succession, adoption, and maintenance, according to the tradition of the particular religious community.³

For those governed by personal laws, such religious systems of rules and norms are emotional and have an important sentimental aspect. However, strict adherence to such personal laws may also marginalize or diminish the rights of some parts of society, such as women, which brings about inequality and injustice. Given these realities, it may be important to impose a Uniform Civil Code because it would treat all citizens equitably across India. In addition, it would remove some of the undue burden on the legislative process of the central and state legislatures.⁴ Dr. B. R. Ambedkar famously stated, “I was born a Hindu, but I assure you that I will not die a Hindu.”⁵ A clear message of Ambedkar’s is that humanity has superiority over religion, and he remained vocal against rigid and discriminatory religious practices throughout his life. Although he was a staunch proponent of secularism, he also supported the Uniform

¹ *Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala*, 2018 SCC OnLine SC 1690.

² **The Constitution of India**, Art. 44 (Government of India, Ministry of Law and Justice 2023).

³ **The Constitution of India**, Art. 13–15 (Government of India, Ministry of Law and Justice 2023).

⁴ **The Constitution of India**, Art. 44 (Government of India, Ministry of Law and Justice 2023).

⁵ B.R. Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste* (Navayana Publishing 2014) 41.

Civil Code as a means of achieving equality and justice.⁶ Dr. Ambedkar also stated, during the Constituent Assembly debates: "I personally do not understand why religion should be given this vast, expansive jurisdiction as to cover the whole of life and to prevent the legislature from encroaching upon that field. After all, what are we having this liberty for?"⁷

III. ATTEMPT TO EXECUTE THE PROPOSAL OF THE UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

There has been an ongoing attempt to implement the concept of "One Nation, One Law" in India, first by the Constituent Assembly, and then by the judiciary. The concept of the Uniform Civil Code was debated sizably in the Constituent Assembly on 23 November 1948. The debate on the Draft Article led to some division amongst members. The opposition was primarily composed of Muslim representatives - Mohd. Ismail Sahab, Nazziruddin Ahmed, Mehboob Ali Begh Sahib Bahadur, Pocker Sahib Bahadur, and Hussain Imam - along with a few Congress leaders.⁸ They insisted that personal laws should be left out of the Draft Article (now Article 44 of the Constitution).⁹ Opposition members noted that the imposition of a Uniform Civil Code would amount to majoritarian despotism that would allow the dominant religion to impose its customs upon the minorities; hence the political and cultural identity of minorities would be rendered impotent. However, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar maintained the faith he had in the UCC. In order to dispel apprehensions, he said during the debates: "Therefore if it was found necessary for the purpose of evolving a single civil code applicable to all citizens irrespective of their religion, certain portions of the Hindu law... were incorporated into the new civil code... I am quite certain that it would not be open to any Muslim to say that the framers... had done great violence to the sentiments of the Muslim community." ¹⁰

Judicial engagement revived the debate in Mohd. Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum and Ors.¹¹, a case which became a turning point in the struggle for Muslim women's rights. According to Muslim personal law (Sharia), women could be subject to unilateral divorce (triple talaq), polygamy, and limited access to maintenance rights - all of which embodied both patriarchal discriminations. Shah Bano claimed maintenance under Section 125 of the Code of

⁶ Shashi Tharoor, *Ambedkar: A Life* (Aleph Book Company 2022) 112–113.

⁷ Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol. VII (4 November 1948) (Lok Sabha Secretariat) 540.

⁸ *Constituent Assembly Debates*, Vol. VII (23 November 1948) (Lok Sabha Secretariat) 540–548

⁹ **The Constitution of India**, Art. 44 (Government of India, Ministry of Law and Justice 2023).

¹⁰ *Constituent Assembly Debates*, Vol. VII (23 November 1948) 547.

¹¹ *Mohd. Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum and Ors.*, AIR 1985 SC 945.

Criminal Procedure, 1973, even when her husband appealed to the Supreme Court, the Court reaffirmed her right to maintenance and advocated for the need for a Uniform Civil Code to prevent such injustices from happening in the future.¹² However, public sentiment followed widespread protests following the events of the case, and Parliament passed the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986, overruling Section 125 CrPC in the case of Muslim women.¹³ The Shah Bano incident strengthens constitutional arguments in favour of the UCC, because it exhibited an instance of personal law obstructing gender justice. Women in India have faced oppression due to harsh beliefs, rituals and practices, entrenched and legitimized in personal laws. Very few women who stand up to this oppression get to surface through legal channels; while the oppression continues the women are bound by social and religious influences. The oppression hastens the slow progress of women's social, economic, and legal growth.

A lack of a UCC is closely related to human rights abuses. Under the Hindu personal law, based on the Mitakshara school of Hindu Law, daughters did not possess coparcenary rights in the ancestral property.¹⁴ Only after the landmark case of *Lata Mittal v. Union of India and Ors.*¹⁵ did the Supreme Court state that Hindu daughters are entitled to equal rights to ancestral property. Justice Sujata V. Manohar commented: "*Several legal reforms have taken place since independence... Yet equal status remains elusive... establishment of laws and bringing practices in conformity thereto is necessarily a long-drawn-out process.*"¹⁶

Likewise, in the case of Christian personal law, a woman could not divorce on the basis of adultery. In order for a woman to obtain divorce, she had to show that adultery was committed in conjunction with cruelty, bestiality, or sodomy, while a man only had to prove adultery.¹⁷ While for Parsi personal law, a Parsi woman loses her property rights if she married a non-Parsi man and a non-Parsi woman was limited to half of her husband's property.¹⁸ A very important case is *Sarla Mudgal v. Union of India*¹⁹. The Supreme Court held that a Hindu marriage performed under the Hindu Marriage Act would not be dissolved if the husband

¹² Id. at 950.

¹³ The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986, No. 25 of 1986.

¹⁴ *Mulla Hindu Law*, 20th ed. (LexisNexis 2021) 323.

¹⁵ *Lata Mittal v. Union of India and Ors.*, (1985) Supp SCC 77.

¹⁶ Sujata V. Manohar, "Women and Personal Laws," (1997) 39 *Journal of the Indian Law Institute* 349, 351.

¹⁷ The Indian Divorce Act, 1869, ss. 10–11.

¹⁸ The Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936.

¹⁹ *Sarla Mudgal v. Union of India*, (1995) 3 SCC 635.

converted to Islam. The Court also held that if a husband had contracted another marriage after converting to Islam then he would be guilty of bigamy under Section 494 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. The Court stated that it was important to have a UCC to avoid conflicts arising between personal laws. The examples illustrate that having no UCC disproportionately disadvantages women. Until a UCC is in place, women will continue to face these inequalities. Several countries in the world with a uniform civil code experienced effective governance, increased gender equality, and decreasing legal disputes.²⁰

IV. ANALYSIS OF UNIFORM CIVIL CODE IN INDIA AND FOREIGN NATIONS

India has long aimed to establish a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) as envisaged in Article 44 of the Constitution of India, which requires the State to secure a uniform civil code for all citizens.²¹ Nevertheless, after seven decades of independence, Goa is the only state in India that has a Uniform Civil Code in effect. Goa's UCC comes from the Portuguese Civil Code, 1867, which remained in effect after Goa's liberation in 1961. According to the Census of 2011, Goa has a total population of 1,458,545, including 739,140 males and 719,405 females. Hindus make up 64.68% of the population, Christians make up 29.86%, and Muslims 5.25%.²² The demographic diversity of Goa is also visible in the large number of migrants that have immigrated due to employment and tourism opportunities.

Under the Goan Civil Code, marriage is recognized as a civil contract and must be registered with the Civil Registrar. Couples are subject to a mandatory system of community property, meaning that only property acquired after marriage is owned jointly by the couple, unless they choose, before marriage, to do otherwise in the prenuptial agreement.²³ Divorce, maintenance, inheritance, and even succession is all handled identically regardless of the religious identity of the couple. One of the main features is that Muslim men in Goa cannot practice polygamy, as required by the Goan Civil Code.²⁴ This unequivocally demonstrates that uniformity in civil matters promotes gender equality and limits discriminatory religious practices that would otherwise prevail over constitutional rights. An empirical observation is that Goan family and

²⁰ U. Baxi, *Law and Social Change* (Eastern Book Company 2014) 191.

²¹ **The Constitution of India**, Art. 44.

²² *Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Government of India*, "Census of India 2011 – Goa," (2011).

²³ *The Portuguese Civil Code*, 1867 (as applicable in Goa), Chapter IV.

²⁴ *Jose Paulo Coutinho v. Maria Luiza Valentina Pereira*, (2019) 9 SCC 657.

succession rights seem to demonstrate significantly less communal conflict compared with other states, and this is largely due to uniformity in personal law. Goa then serves as a meaningful case study to illustrate that a UCC can coexist with multiculturalism and also function while respecting religious freedoms.

To gain a better understanding of its wider significance, it is important to investigate the civil law tradition that many foreign systems of law rely upon as their domestic legal structure. Civil law--also known as the Romano-Germanic legal system originated in continental Europe and is a systematic body of legal principles codified by legislative bodies.²⁵ The Roman legal system emerged with a systematic collection of doctrines that governed the personal relations people had: family, inheritance, obligations and property.²⁶ Civil law systems regard written law as more important than judicial precedents. Countries family law systems include France, Germany, Mexico Brazil, etc., as part of their legal system.²⁷ Another civil code is the Napoleonic Code or Civil Code of 1804, often recognized as one of the most influential civil codes in the world.²⁸ Key substantive areas of civil law in focus are family law, marriage, divorce, succession, property, and torts.²⁹ In terms of the number of religions, cultural identities, and ethnic groups in France, only civil marriages solemnized (recognized) before an official civil entity will have legal validity- in short, religious marriages would not have any legal effect without a civil registration.³⁰ In terms of succession, estates can only be transferred to children and descendants with some level of Aristotle-inspired certainty (the idea that one is morally obligated and bound by law to treat others fairly).³¹

Traditionally, the majority of Islamic countries were ruled predominately by Sharia law, based on Quranic texts, Sunnah, and interpretations and opinions of jurists.³² Today, however, modern and progressive Islamic countries have adopted Sharia rules to their legal systems as part of a civil law reform to catch up with contemporary standards of international human-rights law.³³ Countries including Turkey, Egypt, Malaysia, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Saudi Arabia

²⁵ H. Patrick Glenn, *Legal Traditions of the World*, Oxford University Press, 2014

²⁶ Sherman, *Roman Law in European History*, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

²⁷ Zweigert & Kötz, *Introduction to Comparative Law*, Oxford University Press, 3rd ed.

²⁸ The Napoleonic Code, French Civil Code, 1804.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Book I, II & III.

³⁰ French Civil Code, Art. 165.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Art. 745–757 (Succession Law).

³² Zulfikar Khan, *Islamic Jurisprudence and Legal Reforms*, 2018.

³³ Noor Ali, “Reforms in Personal Law in Muslim-Majority Countries,” *International Journal of Law and Policy Studies*, Vol. 12 (2020).

have created hybrid systems using civil statutes with religious principles, traditions, and practices.³⁴

The intent is not to eliminate the sources of knowledge or jurisprudence but, to simplify and modernize legal processes, while permitting and providing cultural identity. These examples showcase that there is nothing unique about a Uniform Civil Code internationally. Countries everywhere regardless of their religious or cultural diversity are using uniform civil systems in order to promote secularism, equality for women, and legal certainty. Evidence from Goa offers ample support that a UCC could work quite well in India itself. Consequently, introducing a Uniform Civil Code in India becomes necessary for the advancement of human rights, primarily for women who are disproportionately impacted by the various unequal personal laws.

V. JUDICIARY ON UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

The Supreme Court of India has repeatedly stressed the importance of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in addressing issues of substantive equality and discrimination attributable to personal laws. The Court's history began with one of the most controversial cases in Indian constitutional and family law - Mohd. Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum, in which the Court stated that a divorced Muslim woman had the right to receive maintenance from her former husband under Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The Court remarked that a UCC would enhance national integration by abolishing multiple personal laws based on conflicting concepts.³⁵

For almost a decade, the judiciary did not revisit the topic until the case of Sarla Mudgal v. Union of India. In this case, the Supreme Court dealt with Hindu men who converted to Islam for the sole purpose of validating a second marriage, with the first marriage still in place. In this case, the Court condemned this misuse of a religious provision, directing the Government to implement a UCC patterned after the Hindu Code Bills.³⁶ Justice Kuldip Singh noted that without a uniform code, conversion would become a tool of fraud and women would be victims of injustice. There were similar views in Lily Thomas v. Union of India, where the Court ruled that conversion to Islam would not automatically terminate the prior marriage and would mean

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Mohd. Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum and Ors., (1985) 2SCC 556

³⁶ Sarla Mudgal v. Union of India, (1995) 3 SCC 635.

that bigamy would still be an offence.³⁷ Another relevant case is *ABC v. State (NCT of Delhi)* where the Supreme Court held that a single mother of Christian faith could be declared the sole guardian of her child even without the father's consent. The Court also stated that personal laws should not infringe on the best interests of the child and emphasized the need for equality in civil matters.³⁸ Lastly, the most recent case is *Shayara Bano v. Union of India*³⁹ (the 'Triple Talaq' case) where the five-judge Constitution Bench held that the practice of talaq-e-bidat (instant triple talaq) was unconstitutional. The Court also found that discriminatory religious practices cannot outweigh constitutional moral principles and fundamental rights.

In *Satprakash Meena v. Alka Meena*⁴⁰, a husband filed for divorce under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 (HMA), arguing that their marriage was performed according to Hindu customs. The wife contested the petition, asserting that they belonged to the Meena Scheduled Tribe, and therefore Section 2(2) of the HMA did not apply to them. The Supreme Court held: "If members of a tribe voluntarily choose to follow Hindu customs, traditions and rites, they cannot be kept outside the purview of the provisions of the HMA, 1955."⁴¹ The Court also noted that where the parties concede to following the Hindu customs, to deny them the protections of the statutory scheme just because they belong to a tribe must lead to injustice to parties, particularly women. Justice Prathiba M. Singh stated emphatically that the guarantee of Article 44 "ought not to remain a mere hope." Also, in *Ms. Jordan Diengdeh vs S.S. Chopra*⁴² it was stated that "surely the time has now come for a complete reform of law of marriage and make a uniform law applicable to all people irrespective of religion or caste."

In January of 2022 a controversy erupted in Karnataka when those women, girl students, in the government pre-university college in Udupi, were not allowed to enter the classroom and were not allowed to get an education simply because they had the hijab on. This situation escalated when students wearing saffron scarves protested on behalf of the college, as well as having discussions to have petitions filed for the college students, before the Karnataka High Court and citing violations of Articles 19, 21, and 25, of the Constitution, all about exercising the

³⁷ *Lily Thomas v. Union of India*, (2000) 6 SCC 224

³⁸ *ABC v. State (NCT of Delhi)*, (2015) 10 SCC 1.

³⁹ *Shayara Bano v. Union of India*, (2017) 9 SCC 1.

⁴⁰ *Satprakash Meena v. Alka Meena*, 2022 SCC OnLine SC 1500.

⁴¹ When Custom Meets Codified: Delhi High Court Upholds Applicability of Hindu Marriage Act to Hinduised Tribal Marriages", *AdvocateGandhi.com*, available at: <https://advocategandhi.com/when-custom-meets-codified-delhi-high-court-upholds-applicability-of-hindu-marriage-act-to-hinduised-tribal-marriages/> (last visited on 05/11/2025).

⁴² *Ms. Jordan Diengdeh v. S.S. Chopra*, AIR 1985 SC 935

essence of their Constitution. The State argued that Hijab is not essential to Islamic law, and further educational institutions could create rules regarding uniforms to enforce educational and or secular training. Following lengthy proceedings, the Court upheld the position of the State, ruling the uniform policy of the institution outweighed optional religious clothing.⁴³

The controversy prompted significant amounts of discourse regarding secularism, equality and uniformity in public institutions. These Judicial precedents unequivocally established that Personal laws must not prevail over provisions in the Constitution. The culture and religion cannot compromise gender justice and equality and the lack of UCC means exploitation particularly of women. Despite the superior courts multiple recommendations, UCC remains simply a direction, rather than a reality, when there exists political will to make it a reality.

VI. SUGGESTIONS

Even though the discussion surrounding the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) has extended for decades, the continued absence of a uniform legal framework leads to inconsistency, discrimination and uncertainty in personal laws. It is not just legal reform that is needed; but also, the social will and informed engagement of citizens. To this end, the recommendations below are provided to ensure that the UCC, if and when it comes into effect, is operationally feasible, inclusive and widely accepted.

1. Awareness and Legal Literacy Initiatives

We require systematic awareness campaigns to educate citizens about UCC and its actual purpose. For example, providing clarity on misconceptions regarding UCC being a means to impose any one religion's law, particularly Hindu law, should be included in academic discussions, workshops, and through media.

2. Gender-Justice Approach Instead of Uniformity Approach

Rather than just striving for "one single law", the emphasis should be on equal rights for all genders. UCC should be expressed in terms that validate equality, not assimilation or culture imposition.

⁴³ *Resham v. State of Karnataka*, 2022 SCC OnLine Kar 2083.

3. Phased and Optional Implementation

A pilot model such as what has recently occurred in Uttarakhand (2024) should be followed in the rest of the states. Gradually implementing UCC in an optional stage would build trust among the citizens and protect against backlash.

4. Incorporation of Best Practices from Other Legal Systems

By learning from Goa (which has a uniform civil law in place) as well as other national jurisdictions like France and Germany, India can develop a progressive, context-bound UCC without sacrificing or homogenizing cultural plurality.

5. Judicial and Legislative Collaboration

The Supreme Court has emphasized the necessity of UCC repeatedly in landmark cases such as Shah Bano, Sarla Mudgal, ABC v. NCT of Delhi, and Shayara Bano. The legislature should act on these judicial led recommendations and not let article 44 remain only aspirational.

VII. CONCLUSION

The discussion of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is illustrative of the challenge of renegotiating the balance between individual rights and collective identity in a diverse democracy like India. Even though the UCC is recognized in the Constitution under Article 44, the adoption of a UCC has remained elusive after more than seven decades of independence. Personal laws based on religion continue to apply for family matters such as succession, marriage, adoption and divorce, and these personal laws can easily result in discrimination against various groups and in particular against women. Not only does this inequality perpetuate inequality and lessen the idea of substantive equality; it also created a burden on the judiciary to interpret rights consistently.

In effect, the UCC does not intend to abolish religious practices or impose a common culture, but rather to provide every individual equal treatment and protection under the law. True secularism requires the State to act in a neutral manner and protect the individual over religious prescriptions that result in inequality. International examples shows that countries such as France, Turkey and South Africa have successfully adopted uniform civil laws and substantive equality exists without the destruction of cultural or religious diversity. Thus, India stands at a crossroads where the legal paradigms require reform to shift from the idea of equality to the

essence of equality.

To conclude, the implementation of the UCC must be seen as a progressive reform that balances diversity with equality and justice, and it must be based on conversation and consultation with stakeholders, and gradual implementation, so that no community feels excluded from the process. A well-thought-out, inclusive UCC will aid in expanding the idea of gender justice, reducing legal ambiguity, enhancing national integration, and furthering the Constitutional commitment to a just and egalitarian society. We should now move to the stage of realizing the constitutional ideal, not just as legal reform, but as social reform that makes rights independent of religion.

