



**UNIFORM LAWS AND ANALYSIS OF
FAMILY LAW PAPER BY LAW
COMMISSION (2018)**

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RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this research paper is to critically analyse the need of a uniform civil code in the country and also to discuss and point down issues and challenges which arise/may arise in its implementation. Hence following are the research objectives:

- To find out the need for implementation of a uniform civil code throughout the country.
- To point out the challenges in implementation of uniform civil code as well as analyse arguments against it
- To analyse the family law paper of 2018 by law commission of India
- To find out the reforms in the country which has taken place over the years pertaining to UCC

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The central issues which arise for achieving the objectives of this research study are as follows:

- Whether there is a need for implementation of a Uniform Civil Code in the country?
- Whether there exist issues in implementation of a uniform civil code which can be regarded as challenges?

- Whether the law commission of India supports or disregards the Uniform civil Code at the present stage?

INTRODUCTION

India is the world's largest democracy and one of the most populous nation in the world. India is a country which is known for its rich culture and diverse group of people. India follows secularism. There exist people from various religion in the country for example Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism are followed by the majority. The people of different religion follow their own personal laws and are governed by them in matters of marriage, divorce, succession, adoption etc. Since every other religion has its own set of rules and personal laws hence justice provided in different cases of different religious groups may not be the same and uniform. The rules and personal laws of one religion aren't same as the others therefore when deciding in matters pertaining to personal laws there is no confirmation that justice is served in uniform manner.

India is also known as a secular state. But in every religion, there exists some evils which are discriminatory in nature towards a gender. But if the country wants to ensure its secularism in true sense then there is a need to form a uniform civil code which will ensure this secularism. The Uniform civil code will govern people from all walks of life irrespective of their religion and ensure equal justice and duties and responsibilities to all.

History of a uniform civil code finds its place during the constituent assembly debates. The subcommittee formed for deciding upon the fundamental rights and its distribution concluded that the fundamental rights shall be divided into two parts which are (i)



justifiable fundamental rights and (ii) non-justifiable fundamental rights. The uniform civil code was put in the latter which meant it was the part of the fundamental rights which were not enforceable by courts.¹

On the 4th of November 1948 Dr Ambedkar presented a draft of the constitution of India where the uniform civil code found its place in the Directive Principles of State Policy in article 35². On the 23rd of November 1948, the topic of a Uniform civil code was debated upon and the constituent assembly was divided among two groups where the Muslims opposed the idea of a uniform civil code and others were in the favour of it and the Muslims believed that those who has their own personal laws should not be obligated to give them up³.

In 1951 the topic concerning a uniform civil code throughout the country came up again because of the codification of the Hindu personal laws. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru believed that it was not the right time to codify the Muslim personal laws as well as the Muslim community was not ready for such reforms just yet. He feared that a reform at scale could give a way to a civil war in the country⁴.

Discussions on whether a uniform civil code should be brought up in the country were silent until the year 1981. In the year 1981, in the case of **Mohd. Ahmad Khan V Shah Bano Begum and Ors**⁵. The facts of the case

were as such that the husband divorced his 62 years old wife and only provided her maintenance of 5400 rupees as per the Islamic personal law. The wife in return filed a case against her husband under section 125 of the Code of criminal Procedure and stated that she should be paid a sum of 500 rupees per month. The court decided in the favour of the wife and held that a divorcee and a Muslim woman come within the purview of section 125 of the code of criminal procedure. The court stated that national integration is possible only removing different loyalties to laws which have conflicting ideologies.

In **Ms. Jordan Diengdeh V S.S. Chopra**⁶ the question of law arose whether the wife in this case divorce her husband on the grounds of his impotency. The court expressed its displeasure regarding the lack of uniform codes in the country to govern such matters.

In the case of **Sarla Mudgal V Union of India**⁷ a Hindu man converted into Islam for the purpose of marrying more than once. The question of law was to decide the validity of the second marriage. The judgement of this case encompasses serious viewpoints in support of a uniform civil code. The judgement stated when more than eighty percent of the personal laws (referring to Hindu personal laws) has been codified hence there should not exist any further delay for bringing a uniform civil code in the country.

¹ Constituent Assembly Debates, Centre for law and policy research, (9:00am January 17 2020) <https://clpr.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/UCC-Part-1-Constitutional-History.pdf>

² Ibid

³ Supra note 1

⁴ Supra note 1

⁵ Mohd. Ahmad Khan V Shah Bano Begum and Ors, 1985 AIR 945 (India)

⁶ Ms. Jordan Diengdeh vs S.S. Chopra, 1985 AIR 935 (India)

⁷ Sarla Mudgal V Union of India AIR 1955 SC 1531 (India)



In the case of **Shabnam Hashmi V Union of India**⁸ through the facts of the case the question of law arose that whether a Muslim woman is entitled to adopt a child. The court held it affirmative and stated that it is the duty of every individual and also the state to honour the personal laws but it a legislation cannot be hampered when a conflicts arises between legislations and personal laws. The need for a uniform civil code was brought up in this case as well to conclude such irregularities arising out of no uniformity in personal laws.

The third phase of the Uniform civil code started in the year 2015 with the case of **Shayara Bano V Union of India**⁹. The Supreme Court divided the case into two issues that are: uniform civil code and Triple Talaq. Though the practice of triple talaq is now prohibited but there is no uniform law yet to govern all the personal laws of the nation.

NEED FOR UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

The topic of codification of personal laws of different religious groups have always been a very sensitive topic and throughout its history has seen many protests, even when the Hindu personal laws were being codified, it witnessed strong opposition voices.¹⁰

The purpose of a uniform civil code in the country is to bind the country together as a whole by providing same laws for every citizen, irrespective of his or her faiths in different deities, for the purposes of

marriage, adoption, divorce, succession. Article 25 of the constitution of India provides freedom of religion. It guarantees every person the right to freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practice and propagate any religion (subject to public morality, health, etc.) hence the issue arises whether a uniform code for all will hamper this right provided by the constitution of India. Due to the huge population and diversified groups of people believing in different and unlike faiths it becomes difficult for the legislature to bring a code which can govern everyone equally without conflicting with the actual personal laws. A uniform civil code will not only answer India's response to how its citizens accepts their own diversity but also will focus on gender issues pertaining to personal laws of different religion.

In Islam, the man can marry up to four times but his wife cannot and in case she chooses to do she will be treated as an outcast and impure and in Hinduism, women are not coparceners (except in few states).¹¹ This is one example of the discriminatory nature of the personal laws towards the feminine gender. Hence there exists a need for a uniform civil code to solve gender issues in the nation.

Gender justice is a very significant aspect when it comes to implementation of a uniform civil code. Especially when a uniform code has to be implemented in India.

⁸ Shabnam Hashmi V union of India, (2014) 4 SCC 1 (India)

⁹ Shayara Bano V Union of India (2017) 9 SCC 1 (India)

¹⁰ Krishnadas Rajagopal, what is the debate on Uniform Civil Code all about, T.H., September 09, 2018

¹¹ S.Sadhana, A contemporary study on Uniform Civil Code, Volume No. 5, International Journal of Pure and applied mathematics, 4683, 4686-4687, (2018)



The patriarchal notions of the societies are not a foreign culture in the country. The male dominance in the country and the patriarchal discourse of powers via the personal laws¹² gives rise to a need for a uniform civil code. In our country, it is agreed that females, girls and women of different religion as well as different caste reside but, in the end, by hook or crook all of them face the same problem. Women are denied justice, respect and dignity and they are not aware of their rights which has been noticed in multiple occasions¹³. The numerous numbers of family and personal law towards various aspects is confusing as well as different hence the class of illiterate women generally do not differentiate in what one calls culture, custom, religion, crime and patriarchy¹⁴. Why shall be a Islam Practicing Aneesa be at a more disadvantageous position when compared to a Hinduism practicing Sita¹⁵?

A woman is the one who gives birth to her child but under the Hindu personal laws before the amendment act¹⁶, a woman had no right to adopt even if gained the consent of her husband. There were two problems with this why shall a woman be forbidden from adopting a child and if so why shall she need the permission of her husband. In the case of **Malti Ray Chowdhury v. Sudhindranath Majumdar**¹⁷ the court held the adoption made by a Hindu married woman as invalid. The adoption in the present case was made in presence of the husband and at no point was

any objection raised by him while physically handing over the child still the court did not approve of the same¹⁸.

There exist irregular laws with respect to gender in Muslim personal laws also. For example, a man following Islam can marry a more than one woman at once (up to four women in a marriage) but a Muslim woman is denied the same right. Under their personal laws if a woman marries more than one man she will be made liable for bigamy and shall be punished under the Indian Penal Code, under section 494¹⁹.

Above mentioned two examples from two of the most practised religions of the country is illustrated to give a hint of understanding of the double standards which are prominent in the personal laws followed in the country. Many customs which are not given the eligibility of laws and legislations in the country are a part of personal laws of various religious groups present in the country. But how many of these are actually made in good faith with respect to honouring and respecting the female class and making them feel like an equal instead of treating them as mere objects in a patriarchal upbringing?

Gender equality is not the only reason why a uniform civil code should be enacted in India but there exist various reasons which point towards the need for a uniform civil code in the country. Enforcement of a uniform code

¹² Uniform civil code, Drishti, October 07, 2019 <https://www.drishtiiias.com/to-the-points/Paper2/uniform-civil-code>

¹³ Liela Seth, Uniform civil code towards gender justice, Volume 31, India international centre quarterly, 49, 40-54 (2005)

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Supra note 9

¹⁶ Personal Law Amendment Act, 2010

¹⁷ Malti Ray Chowdhury v. Sudhindranath Majumdar A.I.R. 2007 Cal. 4

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Nishtha Jain, Gender Inequality in Hindu and Muslim Personal Laws in India, Volume 1, Issue 3, International Journal of Law Management & Humanities, 6, (2018)



would ensure **national integration** as there will be no discrepancies arising out of varying decisions of the court of law pertaining to different religions. The nation would emerge as one force as detachment between different assemblies would decrease significantly. The sense of unity among the citizens of the country would increase.

The reason India is known as a diversified nation is because of the huge religious and culture integrity it offers to the people of the nation. Religions like Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity Buddhism etc are prevalent in the nation and offers various customs similar yet different from each other. The nation will be deemed as a national integrated place only after all the people of the communities present in the country start following the same set of rules as it will unite every citizen of the country and make them equals in the eye of law²⁰. Unity among the people will be guaranteed only when the set uniform rules are applied to everyone in matters relating to marriage or divorce or adoption or inheritance or every one of the listed subjects²¹. Such national integration or in standard terms the uniform codes in matters pertaining to above mentioned subjects shall be made irrespective of the religion and caste of the people who are going to follow it²².

And also, litigation arising out of divergent personal laws would decrease since everyone would be governed by the same legislation. A uniform civil code poses as an ideal solution to protect citizen's rights in the country as heir fundamental and constitutional rights would be preserved and safeguarded.

Many countries which are termed as **developed nations** and follow the path of **modernity** have a uniform civil code²³. The implementation of a uniform civil code shall eradicate the ruckus of politicians exploiting the general public and gaining votes and winning elections in the name of religion. Though there exist rules and regulations which forbids the politicians engaging in religious norms and supporting a particular religious group or spreading their religious propaganda in the name of culture and religion but there has been instances in the recent past where the *people* holding sufficient power to influence a great and large class of public have used religious tools to manipulate them and gain their confidence in the name of religion.

If a uniform civil code is implemented in the country it would signify that the nation has moved ahead of the religious encumbrances²⁴ and has made peace with the fact that everyone is equal and can justify their living by equating their personal and religious rights with others irrespective of the caste, creed, gender, religion followed by one. A uniform civil code of personal laws will ensure that people and their differences do not arise based up on the laws which govern them in family matters like marriage, inheritance, divorce, adoption etc.

The prime minister of the country has stated previously that his government will take steps to ensure that a uniform civil code is implemented in India as soon as possible and has also ensured that such implementation

²⁰ [Rumani Saikia Phukan](https://www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/society/uniform-civil-code-for-national-integration), Uniform Civil Code for National Integration, Maps of India, November 11, 2014 <https://www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/society/uniform-civil-code-for-national-integration>

²¹ Ibid

²² Supra note 16

²³ Supra note 16

²⁴ Supra note 16



would not mean that people of all the religion follow the Hindu codified law²⁵

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Even while the discussions on uniform civil code took place during the constituent assembly debates mainly two objections were raised²⁶ which are as follows: firstly, that the implementation of a uniform civil code in the country will be violative of the fundamental right of freedom of religion²⁷ and secondly that it will affect the minority groups present in the country²⁸.

On the downside, many fears that a uniform code for everyone would pose as a **threat for minority groups** and that it will swallow their ethnicity, customs and culture. The people opposing the inclusion of a uniform civil code believe that it is unconstitutional as it will take away the rights pertaining to religion and culture which was envisioned by the framers of the constitution of India. A secular state can be interpreted in two ways. One that the state has a uniform civil code that is subject to everyone and the second that a state in which different ethnicities can enjoy and follow their personal faiths and beliefs.²⁹ In the year 2019, the minority groups of the country have voiced their opinion of being

against the idea of a uniform civil code being applied in India³⁰. Zayafab Jilani, a member of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board has expressed his views and stated that the honourable Supreme Court shall not give any government advice about the technicalities of the uniform civil code³¹.

Another argument raised against the implementation of a uniform civil code throughout the entire territory of the country is that it will **affect the secularism**³² present in the nation and will also take a **toll on diversified culture** present in India.

India as a country takes pride in its diversified culture. It is known as a land of cultural integrity and such diversity can be continued in the nation only when all the citizens of the country as well as the central and the state government learn to respect the customs and practices followed by minority communities of the country³³ and also that the people and authorities in power give such minority communities enough space to exist while following their own rituals and customs. The government must respect the sentiments of the minorities present in the country and take it into consideration while deciding upon the status of a uniform civil code in the country³⁴.

²⁵ Priyal sharma, Uniform Civil Code for National Integration, November 11, 2014 <https://www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/society/uniform-civil-code-for-national-integration>

²⁶ d. c. manooja uniform civil code: a suggestion vol. 42 journal of the indian law institute 452, 448 – 475 (2000)

²⁷ India Const. Art 25

²⁸ Mahendra Pal Singh, V.N. Shukla's Constitution of India, 358, 13th edition (2016)

²⁹ Shambhavi, Uniform civil code: the necessity and the absurdity, Volume 2, ILI Law Review, 12, 22-23, (2017)

³⁰ TP Sooraj, Majority of minorities are against the imposition of uniform civil code, TNIE, September 15th, 2019

³¹ Ibid

³² Anubhav Pandey, arguments against implementation of UnIiform Civil Code, Ipleaders Intelligent legal solutions, June 16, 2017

<https://blog.ipleaders.in/arguments-implementation-uniform-civil-code/>

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Supra note 28



The idea of channelizing the personal laws into one single code will snatch the unique identity each of the community holds and will force them to follow a set of rules which may or may not be consistent with the actual religious personal laws. In the case of **S. R. Bommai v Union of India**³⁵ the apex court of the country held:

“The Constitution has chosen secularism as its vehicle to establish an egalitarian social order. Secularism is part of the fundamental law and basic structure of the Indian political system.”

The minorities have also raised the issue that on what basis will it be decided that which laws are needed to be reformed and which laws can exist independently³⁶. How will the distinction between good and bad be decided? For removal of all the alleged wrong personal laws will the people be forced to give up all of their personal laws? Whichever laws the government try to abolish, it will have to justify it on the basis of humanitarian grounds taking into consideration the human rights involved with it. The government will have to take care of the sentimental values attached to a specific personal law.

The uniform civil code discussions in the country are very politically driven. And many believe that by bringing the uniform civil code the nation would turn towards **propagating “hinduvta”** that is the Hindu ideology and minority social and cultural groups would lose their value. Several political parties’ belief that implementation

of a uniform civil code throughout the entire country would be virtually impossible the reason being the rich and diverse cultural of people present in the country. Since not every group would agree to practice a uniform law and not everyone would agree to let go of their personal laws as these laws hold significant value in someone’s respective religion.

The Muslim community oppose the implementation of a uniform civil code in the country stating that its imposition would be equivalent to completely disregarding the personal laws states under Islam in the Holy Quran and it would be an irreversible change resulting into causation of damage to the personal laws of the above-mentioned religion. Many other minority communities are in support of this stance in order to stand up for the faith which they believe in.

The uniform civil code will have to be following the human rights. Thus, it will have to segregate the goods and bad in every religion and offer a solution which is accepted by all. Even after India achieved its freedom almost six decades back, the uniform civil code still is one of the most controversial issues in the country and continue to be so.

FAMILY LAW PAPER BY LAW COMMISSION OF INDIA (2018)

The law commission of the country has taken a vast amount of time, two years to be precise to put forth its view on the need of reforms and a uniform civil code in the country. Over the span of these two years (2016 to 2018) the

³⁵S. R. Bommai v Union of India, 1994 AIR 1918 (India)

³⁶ Supra note 28

³⁷ Anubhav Pandey, Arguments against implementation of uniform civil code, Ipleaders,

(9:10pm 17th Jan 2020)

<https://blog.ipleaders.in/arguments-implementation-uniform-civil-code/>



commission has consulted various papers³⁸ on this subject matter and finally came to a conclusion in the month of August of 2018. The paper has given numerous recommendations and has focused on the agenda of the uniform civil code. It gives emphasis to the point that it is necessary to preserve the religious and cultural rights of the minority groups of the country and their interests should be taken as one of the important issues for the purpose of forming a uniform code. The law commission of India believes that the legislature should focus on the discriminatory practices in various personal laws and should pass laws and legislations to prevent them but at this point of stage in the current social, economic and political scenario, the need for a uniform civil code is neither just nor desirable³⁹.

The law commission has urged and laid importance on the fact that the government and the legislature shall firstly sought to increase the equality among the people of different class and gender rather than jumping on the subject of equality among different and diverse communities in the country⁴⁰. The law commission has dealt with personal laws of different religion which are discriminatory in nature rather than focusing on the mere idea of a code which is uniformly applied on everyone⁴¹.

The diversity which the country has to offer should be respected and be celebrated and it shall be done in such a way that comparatively weak parts of the societies and

communities there in shall not feel that they are being derailed and their personal rights are being snatched away from them as resolving difference in personal laws does not mean that one should be abolished and the other shall prevail⁴². Hence the commission is dealing with laws whose nature is discriminatory in nature rather than imposing an undeviating legislation all together⁴³

There exists norms and rituals which are looked down upon but are still prevalent in the society as they are being followed from centuries and are treated as customs but these social evils shall be eradicated from the purview of respective personal laws of different religions and beliefs. Though the personal law may state that a practice which is discriminatory in nature is essential to the personal law, still it should be erased and eradicated in the interest of the people who will have to suffer. The landmark judgement of *Shayara Bano v Union of India*⁴⁴, where the honourable Supreme Court of India, abolished the practice of Triple Talaq and deemed it to be unconstitutional, is the first step among many others where there shall be reforms in personal laws which are discriminatory in nature.

The law commission also asserts the importance of personal laws and states that it is necessary to preserve the sanctity of such laws. But the laws which are in contravention with the fundamental and constitutional rights of a citizen shall not be provided such

³⁸Anuja, Gyan Verma, Law Panel Tables Consultation Paper on reform in Family Law, LiveMint, August 31, 2018

³⁹Ibid

⁴⁰ Raghav Ohri, Unuform Civil Code: Neither Necessary nor desirable: law panel, ET, August 31, 2018

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Consultation paper on reforms of family law, Law commission of India, Government of India, 7, 1-185, August 2018

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ *Shayara Bano v Union of India*, AIR2017SC609 (India)



safeguard. The law commission has suggested various changes which can be brought by amendments in personal laws and such amendments shall be made where it is necessary and also that amendments and suggestions are not limited to the religious personal laws of different faiths but also for legislations like the Special Marriage Act of 1954⁴⁵.

Most countries are now moving towards recognition of difference, and the mere existence of difference does not imply discrimination, but is indicative of a robust democracy.

It has been seen in the recent years that most of the countries present in the world are having a holistic view and are progressing towards identification of the differences⁴⁶. These differences in various religions and communities present in the country gives the nation the integrity it boasts and as well as is the key to the uniqueness present in India. The difference does not divide the citizens of India but in reality is a tool for increased democracy. Since until now the consensus on a uniform civil code has not been reached so it is in the interest of the state and its people to protect each individual's personal laws.

REFORMS IN PERSONAL LAWS

In the colonial period, the people practicing Hinduism were governed by the Hindu Schools of Law which are Mitakshara and Dayabagha. But since these schools didn't

apply uniformly in the country, different groups of Hindu people derived their own personal laws⁴⁷. Muslim personal laws also had two schools, namely Shia and Sunni, though both of them derived the knowledge from only one source that is the Holy Quran⁴⁸. Christians and Parsi personal laws were codified⁴⁹.

Dr. Ambedkar who was the first law minister of Independent India purported the idea of codifying the Hindu Personal Laws and subsequently the following acts came into existence within a few years of Independence:

- Hindu Marriage Act, 1955,
- Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956,
- Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956,
- Hindu Succession Act, 1956

From the year 1950 to 1956, the Hindu Personal Laws were codified and through it replaced all the personal laws which were not uniform in nature. Though Dr. Jawaharlal Nehru believed that the Muslim community was not ready for such unification of laws pertaining to the political scenario of the country, he believed that it could be a way of igniting a civil war in the country⁵⁰.

The next reform pertaining to the family and personal law in the country took place in the year 1986. Muslim Women (protection of rights on divorce) Act came into force after

⁴⁵ Consultation paper on reforms of family law, Law commission of India, Government of India, 16, 1-185, August 2018

⁴⁶ Consultation paper on reforms of family law, Law commission of India, Government of India, 7, 1-185, August 2018

⁴⁷ D. C. Manooja uniform civil code: a suggestion Vol. 42 Journal of the Indian Law Institute, 450, 448-457 (2000)

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Christian Marriage Act, 1987 and Indian Divorce Act, 1869

⁵⁰ Supra note 37



the Shah Bano Case⁵¹. The act safeguarded the rights of Muslim women in terms of maintenance and situations after divorce.

An act which is uniformly applied throughout the country on every citizen of India is the Special Marriage Act of 1956. This act enabled people marry outside their religion without interchanging or renouncing their own religion or the faith which they followed and have been brought up in.

The law commission report of the year 2018 stated that presently there exist no need in India to enact. In the year 2019, law against Triple Talaq was passed which is a historic moment for reforms in the Muslim Personal law.

CONCLUSION

Though there exist a positive side to the implementation of a uniform civil code in the country but it does not outweigh the downfall which are there. To respect one's personal and religious rights shall be taken into consideration while deciding upon such matter. Regarding questions raised for biased and discriminatory practices in different religious laws, the answer to it is amendments in those specific discriminatory personal laws instead of imposition of a uniform civil code on everyone.

Even the law commission of India in the year 2018 has concluded that at this stage the need for a uniform civil code is not required. It is ambiguous to enforce one legislation on every one and thus depriving them of their personal laws. Personal laws also signify the religious history and customs which have been carried on from centuries and if a

uniform code is brought into existence then such histories will be vanished and with it the religious ethnicities will also demolish.

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