

Interfaith Love Under Siege

Posted at: 25/02/2025

Interfaith Love Under Siege: The Impact of UCC in India

Context:

On **January 27, 2025**, Uttarakhand became the first Indian state to implement the **Uniform Civil Code (UCC)**. While it is promoted as a step toward **gender justice, uniformity, and efficiency**, its **broader impact raises concerns**:

- **Increased state control over personal relationships.**
- **Bureaucratic hurdles for interfaith marriages and live-in relationships.**
- **Stronger religious and patriarchal influence over personal choices.**

When combined with **anti-conversion laws**, these measures **curtail personal freedom, deepen social divisions, and encourage moral policing.**

Challenges Faced by Interfaith Couples in India

Interfaith relationships in India face **social opposition, legal restrictions, and political interference.**

1. Social Barriers

- A **2014 survey of 70,000 people** found that:
 - **Less than 10% of urban Indians** had a family member who married outside their caste.
 - **Only 5%** reported an interfaith marriage in their family.
- **Family and community pressure** discourage such unions, often leading to **forced separations or violence.**

2. Legal Hurdles: Special Marriage Act, 1954

- Requires a **30-day public notice**, exposing couples to **harassment and threats.**

3. Anti-Conversion Laws

- States like **Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Rajasthan** impose strict regulations on religious conversion, including:
 - **Mandatory declarations and waiting periods.**
 - **Approval from district magistrates.**
- These laws are **often misused.** In **Uttar Pradesh**, **63 out of 101 complaints** under the

anti-conversion law were filed by **vigilante groups**, not affected individuals.

Such laws **fail to protect individuals** and instead **encourage third-party interference in personal matters**.

State Control Over Live-in Relationships

The **UCC in Uttarakhand** extends **state control beyond marriages**, targeting **live-in relationships** through **mandatory registration**.

1. Complicated Registration Process

- Couples must **submit a 16-page application** with identity proofs.
- **Religious or community leaders must approve** their relationship.
- **Family members are notified**, even against the couple's wishes.

2. Criminalization of Non-Compliance

- **Failure to register results in:**
 - **Up to six months in jail.**
 - **A ₹25,000 fine.**

3. Disproportionate Impact on Interfaith Couples

- Many interfaith couples **avoid registration due to fear of backlash**.
- In Uttarakhand, **only one couple** has successfully registered, while others have sought **legal protection from the High Court**.

These measures **increase state surveillance**, making **personal choices a legal and public matter**.

Broader Implications

1. Strengthening Religious Authority in a Secular State

- **Religious certification for marriage or conversion** gives **religious leaders more control over personal relationships**.
- This **contradicts India's secular and constitutional values**.

2. Limiting Women's Freedom

- **Mandatory family notifications** expose women to **coercion and honor-based violence**.
- Women in interfaith relationships are **often depicted as victims**, restricting their choices.

3. Encouraging Vigilantism

- Public notices allow **extremist groups to track and harass interfaith couples**.
- Instead of **protecting individuals**, these laws **enable communal policing**.

4. Expansion to Other States

- Rajasthan's High Court has proposed **similar live-in registration rules**.
 - Gujarat is drafting a UCC based on Uttarakhand's model.
 - This trend threatens India's diverse traditions, imposing **strict controls on personal relationships**.
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Conclusion: A Threat to Personal Freedom

The **UCC in Uttarakhand, combined with anti-conversion laws**, is a **serious intrusion into personal choices**. These laws:

- **Make interfaith unions and live-in relationships difficult.**
- **Give religious authorities undue influence.**
- **Strengthen patriarchal control over women.**
- **Encourage moral policing and vigilantism.**

If other states **follow this model**, India risks **eroding personal freedoms, democracy, and secular values**.



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