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WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal provided dedicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

UNIFIED PATHS: DISSECTING UTTARAKHAND'S REVOLUTIONARY UCC ACT 2024

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ABSTRACT

The legislative commentary on the Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Act 2024 represents a critical response to a significant legislative development in the state. This commentary is essential in providing a nuanced analysis of the act's provisions and implications, addressing both its positive aspects and potential challenges. By delving into the complexities of the UCC, the commentary aims to offer policymakers and stakeholders a comprehensive understanding of its impact on personal laws governing marriage, divorce, inheritance, and live-in relationships in Uttarakhand. Moreover, the commentary seeks to foster informed dialogue and constructive debate by highlighting concerns such as privacy infringement, potential discrimination against minority communities, and legal and administrative challenges in implementation. Through its persuasive argumentation and evidence-based analysis, the commentary advocates for amendments and refinements to the act that address these legitimate concerns while upholding the principles of justice, equality, and human rights. Ultimately, the commentary serves as a vital tool for shaping the trajectory of legislative reform in Uttarakhand, ensuring that the UCC reflects the diverse needs and aspirations of its populace while promoting fairness, inclusivity, and social justice.

KEYWORDS: Uniform Civil Code, Social Justice, Policy reform, Cultural Sensitivity, Modernisation

INTRODUCTION

The Uttarakhand Assembly has passed the Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Act 2024, making it the first state in independent India to adopt the Uniform Civil Code. The act, as approved, proposes uniform rules for marriage, divorce, property inheritance, and live-in relationships for all Uttarakhand residents (except Scheduled Tribes), regardless of religion or beliefs. The act makes it a single personal law applied to all the people of state.

This act is based on Article 44 (Directive Principles of State Policy) of the Constitution, which directs the state to work to ensure that individuals have access to a Uniform Civil Code across India. Some provisions of the act are progressive and required for the evolving society but some provisions like mandatory registration of live-in relationship, inheritance rights, etc put forth concerns regarding privacy and infringement of rights of an individual.

UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

Uniform Civil Code is defined in our Constitution under Article 44 which states that it is the state's responsibility to ensure that citizens have access to a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India.

It is a uniform set of governing principles for all Indian citizens to replace personal laws (based on religious scriptures and practices). These statutes are well-known in public law and apply to marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, and maintenance. Presently, Goa is the only state with a common family law, and the 1954 Special Marriage Act permits any citizen to marry beyond the scope of any special religious personal law.

BACKGROUND OF THE ACT

The debate for a uniform civil code dates back to the colonial period in India. The Lex Loci Report of October 1840 emphasised the need and necessity of uniformity in the codification of Indian law, namely crimes, evidence, and contracts. However, it also advocated that personal laws of Hindus and Muslims be kept outside from such codification. Also, at the time, reformers were advocating for laws to protect women from discrimination based on religious practices such as Sati. The Queen's 1859 Proclamation promised absolute non-interference in religious matters.

AFTER INDEPENDENCE

During the constitution's drafting, prominent leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. B.R Ambedkar, who wanted to reform society by implementing the Uniform Civil Code, included the UCC in the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP, Article 44), owing to opposition from religious fundamentalists and a lack of awareness among the masses at the time.

It goes on to say: "The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a Uniform Civil Code throughout the territory of India". Because it was included in the DPSP, and was not

enforceable in court, minorities, particularly Muslims, believe that it violates their personal laws. Then a series of Acts were passed to codify Hindu laws in the form of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956, and the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956, collectively known as the Hindu Code Act (covers Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains, as well as different religious denominations of Hinduism), which allows women the right to divorce and inheritance, made caste irrelevant to marriage, and abolished bigamy and polygamy.

The Uttarakhand government had long considered establishing a uniform civil code for the state. Finally, the Uttarakhand government announced the formation of a five-member Expert Committee, chaired by former Supreme Court Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai, to prepare the Uniform Civil Code act. The committee also included the following members:

- Permod Kohli (Hon'ble Judge)
- Shri Shatrughna Singh (IAS)
- Shri Manu Gaur (Social activist)
- Prof. Surekha Dangwal (Vice Chancellor of Doon University)
- Shri Ajay Mishra (Secretary of R.C. Uttarakhand)

Following significant deliberation and adjustments, the document was finalised and recently approved by the Uttarakhand Assembly.

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Act recently passed by the Uttarakhand Legislative Assembly serves the overarching purpose of *consolidating and standardizing personal laws* related to marriage and property inheritance within the state. By replacing diverse personal laws applicable to different religious communities with a singular set of laws that apply uniformly to all citizens, irrespective of their religious affiliations, the act aims to establish a more consistent legal framework. Central to its objectives is the promotion of *gender equality*, seeking to treat men and women equally in matters such as marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance. The UCC further strives to *modernize and simplify the legal framework* governing personal affairs, aligning it with contemporary values and constitutional principles. Additionally, the act may protect women's rights by ensuring equal property shares and prohibiting discriminatory practices like triple talaq. The proposed legislation also addresses the issue of age for marriage, aiming to establish a uniform standard across all religions and

communities. Notably, the UCC Act introduces provisions for the mandatory registration of *live-in relationships*, reflecting an intent to *regulate* such relationships and grant them legal recognition. Overall, the act signifies a comprehensive effort to reform personal laws, fostering uniformity, gender equality, and modernization within the legal landscape of Uttarakhand.

SCOPE OF THE ACT

It applies to all residents of Uttarakhand except the tribal community of the State. Section 2 of the Act explicitly states that the code does not apply to members of any Scheduled Tribes as defined in Article 366(25) of the Constitution. Additionally, the provision exempts individuals and groups whose customary rights are protected under Part XXI of the Constitution.

This delineation sets the boundaries of applicability, ensuring that the UCC selectively governs the personal laws of the majority population while respecting the unique legal and cultural contexts of the tribal communities and those with protected customary rights.

POLICY GUIDELINES

The new law provides guidelines on various subjects such as:

I. MARRIAGE

The act introduces mandatory registration of marriages within 60 days of solemnization, applicable to all residents of Uttarakhand regardless of whether the marriage takes place within or outside the state. While non-registration doesn't invalidate marriages, parties may face a penalty of Rs 10,000 for non-compliance. Intentionally providing incorrect information carries a heavier penalty of Rs 25,000 fine and a three-month prison sentence. The act also stipulates that marriages cannot be dissolved without court permission, with violation potentially leading to a three-year jail term.

Under the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), the act prohibits multiple spouses and mandates that marriages only occur between one man and one woman. Additionally, it sets the minimum age of marriage at 21 for boys and 18 for girls.

Notably, certain marriage practices common in the Muslim community, such as nikah-halala and triple talaq, are restricted without explicit mention. For instance, individuals are now permitted to remarry their divorced spouse without conditions, effectively eliminating the practice of nikah-halala as outlined in Section 30(1) of the act.

II. DIVORCE

Under the Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Act 2024, both men and women are granted equitable rights in divorce proceedings. Various grounds, including adultery, abuse, abandonment, conversion to another faith, and mental illness, are recognized as legitimate reasons for seeking divorce.

However, it's notable that the UCC does not acknowledge the concept of "irretrievable breakdown of marriage," which denotes a situation where the marital relationship has irreparably deteriorated, rendering its continuation futile. Additionally, the act allows for the annulment of "voidable" marriages due to reasons such as non-consummation or violation of marriage conditions.

Women are afforded specific divorce rights under the UCC in two distinct scenarios:

- i. if the spouse is convicted of rape or other unnatural sexual offenses, and
- ii. if the husband has multiple wives.

In cases of divorce, custody of children under the age of five automatically vests with the mother, as stipulated by the UCC. It's essential to note that the Guardians and Wards Act of 1890 continues to govern court-appointed guardianships in such instances.

Furthermore, the UCC safeguards the rights of individuals in the event of religious conversion by either spouse without the other's consent. In such circumstances, the affected party retains the right to file for divorce and claim maintenance allowance as per the provisions outlined in the act.

III. LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIPS

The Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Act 2024 mandates the registration of all live-in relationships occurring within the state's jurisdiction, irrespective of the partners' citizenship status. This requirement underscores the act's commitment to establishing a regulated framework for cohabitation arrangements, aimed at ensuring legal recognition and protection for individuals involved in such relationships.

Failure to comply with the registration mandate may result in the issuance of a notice to the partners, with potential criminal charges being filed against them. The imposition of criminal penalties, including imprisonment for up to three months, serves as a deterrent against non-compliance and reinforces the importance of adhering to legal obligations under the UCC.

Furthermore, the act stipulates that providing false information during the registration process

may lead to additional penalties, including fines not exceeding ₹25,000 or imprisonment, or both. This provision underscores the significance of transparency and honesty in fulfilling legal requirements associated with live-in relationships.

The dissolution of a live-in relationship under the UCC can only be initiated through the presentation of a written statement by the partners, affirming their mutual decision to terminate the connection. This requirement ensures that the dissolution process is formalized and documented, providing clarity and legal validity to the decision.

Importantly, the act acknowledges the rights of women who have been deserted by their live-in partners, enabling them to seek maintenance through appropriate legal channels. This provision reflects a commitment to safeguarding the welfare and interests of vulnerable individuals within live-in relationships, particularly in cases of abandonment or neglect.

Moreover, children born from live-in relationships are afforded legitimacy under the UCC, irrespective of the marital status of the parents. This recognition ensures that children born out of such unions are entitled to legal rights and protections, including inheritance and parental support.

IV. QUEER RELATIONSHIP

The Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Act 2024 delineates the scope of its provisions to exclusively address heterosexual partnerships, thereby excluding members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Despite utilizing gender-neutral language such as "partners," the act explicitly defines a live-in relationship as a "relationship between a man and a woman" who cohabit in a shared household under an arrangement akin to marriage.

This exclusionary approach restricts the legal recognition and protection afforded to individuals within same-sex relationships, effectively denying them access to the rights and benefits extended to heterosexual couples under the UCC. By defining live-in relationships solely in terms of opposite-sex partnerships, the act perpetuates discriminatory practices and fails to acknowledge the diverse forms of relationships existing within society.

Furthermore, the absence of provisions addressing the rights and concerns of LGBTQIA+ individuals reflect a lack of inclusivity and sensitivity towards their unique needs and experiences. It reinforces societal norms that prioritize heterosexual relationships while marginalizing and erasing the existence of queer identities and partnerships.

The exclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community from the scope of the UCC Act represents a missed opportunity to promote equality, diversity, and social acceptance. It underscores the

importance of adopting inclusive legal frameworks that recognize and respect the rights of all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

V. LEGAL RECOGNITION OF CHILDREN

The Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Act 2024 abolishes the concept of "illegitimate children," thereby providing legal recognition to children born out of voidable marriages and live-in relationships. Under the provisions of the act, all children, regardless of the circumstances of their birth, are granted legal status and entitlements.

This significant amendment to the legal framework eliminates the stigma associated with the term "illegitimate" and ensures that children are afforded equal rights and protections under the law. By recognizing the rights of children born out of voidable marriages and live-in relationships, the act promotes inclusivity and upholds the principle of equality before the law. Moreover, the recognition of children irrespective of the marital status of their parents reflects a progressive approach towards family law, acknowledging the diverse forms of relationships and family structures present in contemporary society. It reinforces the fundamental principle that every child deserves legal protection and acknowledgment of their rights, regardless of the circumstances of their birth.

VI. INHERITANCE

The Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Act 2024 ensures equal property rights for all sons and daughters, irrespective of their birth status or method of conception (such as IVF or surrogacy). This includes providing property rights to illegitimate offspring, adopted children, and individuals born via surrogacy or assisted reproductive technologies.

Furthermore, the act abolishes the coparcenary system that currently governs ancestor property under the Hindu Succession Act of 1956. By eliminating this system, the UCC Act aims to promote equality and fairness in property inheritance, irrespective of gender or birth status.

In cases of intestate succession, where there is no legally recognized will, the act mandates equal property rights for the spouse, children, and parents. This departure from existing personal laws ensures that all eligible heirs are treated equitably in matters of property distribution.

The Act's provisions regarding property rights represent a significant step towards establishing a more just and inclusive legal framework, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their circumstances, have equal access to property inheritance.

EXEMPTIONS

Scheduled Tribes (STs) have been exempted from the purview of the act. The tribal population in the state, which is around 3%, had been voicing its dissent against UCC in the wake of the special status accorded to them.

IMPLICATIONS

The Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Act 2024 marks a significant milestone in the state's legislative landscape, aiming to standardize personal laws governing marriage, divorce, inheritance, and other related matters for all residents. This comprehensive policy initiative reflects an ambitious attempt to promote uniformity, gender equality, and modernization within Uttarakhand's legal framework. However, a thorough analysis of the UCC Act is imperative to evaluate its implications, effectiveness, and potential challenges. By examining its provisions, rationale, and anticipated impact, we can gain deeper insights into the complexities and considerations surrounding this landmark legislation.

I. POSITIVE IMPLICATIONS

The act represents a landmark step towards fostering social cohesion, equality, and modernization within the legal framework of the state. By consolidating personal laws related to marriage, divorce, property inheritance, and live-in relationships into a singular, uniform code, the act seeks to establish a more equitable and standardized legal system for all residents of Uttarakhand.

Some positive aspect of the act includes:

A. Gender Equality Advancement

The act's emphasis on treating men and women equally in matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption is a significant stride towards gender equality. Traditionally, personal laws have often been skewed in favor of men, particularly in matters of inheritance and divorce. By enshrining equal rights for both genders within the legal framework, the UCC not only addresses these historical imbalances but also reinforces the constitutional principle of gender equality. This move is crucial for promoting women's empowerment and fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

B. Modernization of Legal Framework

The UCC represents a significant modernization of the legal framework governing personal affairs in Uttarakhand. By replacing archaic and disparate personal laws with a unified code, the act simplifies legal procedures and enhances accessibility to justice for all citizens. This modernization is essential for keeping pace with evolving societal norms and values, as well as for ensuring clarity and consistency in legal proceedings. Moreover, it reflects a commitment to aligning legal practices with contemporary principles of justice, equality, and human rights.

C. Protecting Vulnerable Individuals

The UCC includes provisions aimed at protecting vulnerable individuals, particularly women and children, from exploitation and discrimination. For example, the act grants specific rights to women to seek divorce in cases of rape or other unnatural sexual offenses committed by their spouses. It also ensures the custody rights of mothers for children under the age of five in cases of divorce or separation, thereby safeguarding the welfare of young children. Additionally, the act eliminates the concept of "illegitimate children," granting legal status to all children irrespective of their birth circumstances. These provisions underscore the UCC's commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of all individuals within society.

D. Promotion of Social Justice and Inclusivity

By guaranteeing equal property rights to all sons and daughters, including those born out of wedlock or through assisted reproductive technologies, the UCC promotes social justice and inclusivity. Historically, personal laws have often favored legitimate heirs over illegitimate ones, leading to disparities in inheritance rights. The UCC rectifies this injustice by ensuring that all children, regardless of their birth circumstances, are entitled to an equal share of ancestral property. This move not only promotes fairness and equality but also fosters greater social cohesion and solidarity within families and communities.

II. CONCERNS REGARDING THIS POLICY

The Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Act 2024 represents a significant legislative initiative aimed at standardizing personal laws related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and other matters for all residents of Uttarakhand. While the act seeks to promote uniformity and gender equality, several concerns have been raised regarding its potential implications and implementation.

A. Privacy and Individual Autonomy

The act mandates the registration of marriages and live-in relationships within a specified timeframe, raising concerns about privacy infringement and state interference in personal matters. Marriage and relationships are deeply personal decisions, and imposing mandatory registration may encroach upon individuals' autonomy to make choices regarding their personal lives without government intervention. Penalizing non-compliance may also create undue pressure on individuals to conform to societal norms or government mandates, limiting their freedom of choice and privacy rights.

- **Privacy Infringement:** The mandatory registration of live-in relationships infringes upon individuals' **privacy rights**. Personal relationships are intimate and private, and imposing state intervention through registration may be seen as intrusive.

For example: Imagine a couple who has chosen to live together without formal marriage. They value their privacy and autonomy. The UCC's requirement forces them to disclose their relationship status to authorities, which they find uncomfortable and is a clear violation of their privacy and autonomy.

- **Pressure to Conform:** Penalizing non-compliance puts undue pressure on couples to conform to societal norms or government mandates.

For example: Consider a young couple who decides to live together before marriage due to personal reasons. The fear of legal consequences may coerce them into registering their relationship, even if they prefer privacy and this will lead to failure of the very main purpose of the concept of live in relationship.

- **Stigmatization and Discrimination:** The UCC may inadvertently stigmatize live-in relationships by treating them differently from legally wedded marriages.
- **Complexity and Bureaucracy:** The UCC introduces bureaucratic processes for couples already navigating the complexities of their relationships.

For example: A couple in a live-in relationship faces administrative hurdles—submitting statements, verifying details, and facing penalties—adding stress to their personal lives.

The UCC's approach to live-in relationships raises valid concerns about privacy, autonomy, and the balance between state regulation and personal choices. Legislators must carefully consider these criticisms to ensure a fair and inclusive legal framework.

B. Potential Discrimination and Exclusion

Despite the intent to provide uniformity, there's a risk that the UCC Act may inadvertently discriminate against certain communities or individuals. Different communities in Uttarakhand have diverse cultural and religious practices, and imposing a uniform civil code may overlook or disregard these unique traditions. This could lead to exclusion or marginalization of minority groups whose practices diverge from the standardized norms, perpetuating inequalities and social divisions within the state.

- **Customary Practices of Indigenous Population:** In the remote villages of Uttarakhand, indigenous populations except scheduled tribes, have their own customary practices related to marriage, inheritance, and property rights. These practices often differ significantly from mainstream Hindu norms.

For example: The Jaunsari tribe follows matrilineal descent, where property passes from mother to daughter. Imposing a uniform civil code that disregards such traditions could marginalize these communities and disrupt their social fabric.

- **Religious and Cultural Diversity:** Uttarakhand is home to various religious communities—Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Christians. Each community has distinct rituals and practices related to marriage, divorce, and family matters.

For example: A Sikh couple's Anand Karaj (marriage ceremony) involves specific religious rites. If the UCC standardizes marriage procedures without considering these nuances, it may exclude Sikh couples from practicing their faith fully.

- **LGBTQ+ Relationships:** The UCC's focus on heterosexual norms may overlook LGBTQ+ relationships. As same sex marriage is not recognized in India yet and there might be same sex couples living together so that might cause ambiguity regarding extent of this act and its implication on them.

For example: Consider the case of a same-sex couple, X and Y, who have been in a long-term relationship and decided to live together in Uttarakhand. While they are not legally married due to the lack of recognition for same-sex marriage, they consider themselves to be partners in a committed relationship.

However, under the provisions of the UCC, which explicitly define live-in relationships as those between a man and a woman, X and Y's relationship may not be recognized or protected by the law and if X and Y were to face issues related to property rights, inheritance, or child custody, the lack of legal recognition for their relationship could leave them vulnerable and unprotected. They may not have access to the same rights

and benefits afforded to heterosexual couples under the UCC, leading to potential discrimination and inequality.

The UCC must strike a delicate balance between uniformity and respecting diverse cultural, religious, and regional practices. Failing to do so risks exclusion, marginalization, and perpetuation of inequalities within the state.

C. Impact on Tribal Communities not under the term Schedule Tribe

While the Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Act 2024 exempts Scheduled Tribes from its purview, concerns persist regarding its impact on indigenous communities not covered by the Scheduled Tribe list. These communities, often marginalized and overlooked, have their own distinct legal and cultural traditions governing various aspects of life, including marriage, inheritance, and social customs.

The imposition of a uniform civil code could potentially infringe upon the rights and autonomy of these indigenous communities, undermining their traditional practices and eroding their cultural identity. For instance, many indigenous groups have customary laws that regulate land ownership, matrimonial arrangements, and community governance. The imposition of a uniform code could disrupt these systems, leading to conflicts and tensions within these communities.

Moreover, indigenous communities often face challenges in accessing justice and legal resources, particularly in remote and underserved areas. The imposition of a uniform civil code may exacerbate these challenges, further marginalizing these communities and depriving them of their rights.

For example: Consider the case of a tribal community in Uttarakhand that has traditionally practiced communal land ownership and inheritance rights based on customary laws. If the UCC were to override these customary practices and impose uniform rules on property inheritance, it could lead to internal disputes and undermine the social fabric of the community. Similarly, in matters of marriage and family relations, indigenous communities often have unique customs and traditions that differ from mainstream legal norms. The imposition of uniform marriage laws could restrict the freedom of individuals within these communities to marry according to their cultural practices, leading to a loss of identity and cultural erosion. Therefore, while the UCC aims to standardize personal laws and promote gender equality, it

must be mindful of the diverse cultural and legal traditions of indigenous communities not covered by the Scheduled Tribe list. Any legislation should be sensitive to the rights and autonomy of these communities, ensuring that their unique cultural heritage and social fabric are preserved and respected.

D. Legal and Administrative Challenges

Implementing a uniform civil code across a diverse population poses significant legal and administrative challenges. The act's provisions must be uniformly enforced and administered, requiring robust legal frameworks and administrative infrastructure. However, the complexity of personal laws and the diversity of societal practices within Uttarakhand may complicate enforcement efforts, leading to inconsistencies or inequalities in the application of the law. Moreover, the reliance on administrative mechanisms for registration and enforcement may strain existing resources and infrastructure, hindering effective implementation.

For example: In Uttarakhand, the **Bhotiya** tribe follows unique marriage customs. Their ceremonies involve community participation and rituals specific to their culture. Administering a uniform code that disregards these nuances may lead to inconsistencies.

- **Enforcement in Remote Areas:** Uttarakhand has remote villages and hilly terrains. Ensuring UCC compliance in these areas requires efficient administrative reach.

For example: Imagine a couple residing in a remote Himalayan village. Registering their live-in relationship becomes challenging due to limited access to government offices and officials.

- **Resource Constraints:** Implementing the UCC necessitates additional administrative resources—registrars, legal experts, and infrastructure.

For example: A surge in registration requests strains existing resources. Overburdened officials may struggle to process applications promptly, causing delays and frustration.

- **Legal Literacy Gap:** Many citizens lack legal awareness. Understanding UCC provisions and registration requirements can be daunting.

For example: An elderly couple in a remote village may not comprehend the UCC's implications. They might unintentionally violate the law and face consequences without even any fault.

The act's implementation requires thoughtful navigation of legal complexities, cultural diversity, and administrative efficiency. Addressing these challenges ensures a fair and

inclusive legal framework for all.

While the Uttarakhand UCC Act aims to standardize personal laws and promote gender equality, it raises several concerns regarding privacy infringement, potential discrimination, impact on tribal communities, legal and administrative challenges, among others. Addressing these concerns through careful deliberation, community engagement, and legislative refinement will be essential to ensure the act's effectiveness and acceptance within the state.

CONCLUSION

The Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Act 2024 represents a significant step towards standardizing personal laws and promoting gender equality within the state, it is essential to acknowledge and address the concerns raised regarding its implementation. The mandatory registration of marriages and live-in relationships, potential discrimination against minority communities, impact on tribal traditions, and legal and administrative challenges are valid considerations that require careful attention.

However, it is equally important to recognize the positive implications of the UCC, such as gender equality advancements, modernization of the legal framework, protection of vulnerable individuals, and promotion of social justice and inclusivity. These aspects underscore the need for a uniform civil code to ensure fairness, consistency, and equal rights for all residents of Uttarakhand.

To address the concerns raised, policymakers must engage in a process of dialogue, consultation, and amendment. Amendments to the act could include provisions to safeguard privacy and individual autonomy, ensure cultural sensitivity and inclusivity, and overcome legal and administrative challenges. By incorporating these amendments, the UCC can evolve into a more robust and equitable legal framework that upholds the rights and values of all citizens.

While the Act lays the foundation for a more uniform and equitable legal system, it is imperative to refine and amend the legislation to address the legitimate concerns raised by stakeholders. Through a collaborative and inclusive approach, policymakers can ensure that the UCC reflects the diverse needs and aspirations of Uttarakhand's populace while advancing

the principles of justice, equality, and human rights.

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