India's constitution guarantees it, but 50 years after gaining independence, a uniform civil code still remains a topic for debate and conjecture rather than a reality.

"Religion and Personal Law in Modern India: A Colloquium" addressed this issue from a number of perspectives as a panel of distinguished legal experts and Indologists convened Mar. 26-27 to present papers and conduct discussions at the IU School of Law in Bloomington.

Co-chaired by Tagore Professor and Director of India Studies Gerald J. Larson and IUB professor of law, William Popkin, the colloquium was conceived as a forum to promote discussion of this key constitutional point in India.

The presentations addressed the issue of Article 44 of the "Directive Issues of State Policy" of the Constitution of India, namely: "The State shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India."

"The colloquium served to examine all aspects of the personal law issue: the desirability of a uniform civil code, the current political situation in India in terms of the development of a uniform civil code, and the attitudes among various social groups (Muslims, Hindus, Christians; young married couples, older religious leaders, etc.) toward the development of a uniform code," Professor Larson comments.

"Growing out of the papers and presentations will also come a volume of essays to be published jointly in the United States and India," he adds. The volume will be a project for the coming year as the panel continues its work on the colloquium topics.

The three sessions of the colloquium viewed the issues with regard to gender issues, comparative perspectives on personal law, and attitudes of Hindus, Muslims, and other groups regarding personal law and a uniform civil code. Moderators for the sessions were IU School of Law professors Steve Johnson, Daniel Conkle, and Popkin.

Colloquium participants included faculty members from the Law Schools of Harvard and University of Wisconsin; the School of Religion at the University of Iowa; Cleveland-Marshall College of Law; Hampton University; University of Cincinnati; DePauw University; Indiana State University; and IU's School of Law, the departments of Religious Studies and Criminal Justice, and the India Studies Program.