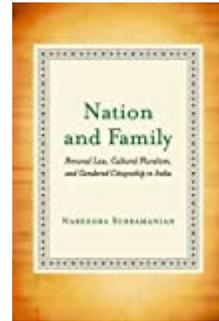




**Narendra Subramanian.** *Nation and Family: Personal Law, Cultural Pluralism, and Gendered Citizenship in India.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014. 400 pp. \$65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8047-8878-6.



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## Developing Personal Laws and Balancing Multiculturalism in Postcolonial India

Narendra Subramanian provides a detailed historical account of the development of personal laws in post-colonial India. He analyzes this development through the ideas of cultural pluralism and gender equality. India is a multicultural, multireligious, and multilingual society with diverse castes and communities. In postindependent India, legislature has given due significance to the value of "equality before law" while passing personal laws concerning marriage, inheritance of ancestral property, and women's rights in their spouse's families. However, both the legislature and judiciary have been sensitive toward the concerns of different religious, ethnic, and caste groups. They have made conscious efforts to maintain balance between the value of "equality before law" and demand for "legal pluralism."

*Nation and Family* raises similar concerns with detailed discussions and debates surrounding particular personal laws and legal cases. The book is thematically divided into six chapters which examine nationalism, minority accommodation, cultural mobilization, legal plu-

ralism, secularism, and multiculturalism in India respectively. Subramanian successfully chronicles, analyzes, and charts the development of personal law in postcolonial India. He has extensively studied the exercise of law making, judicial recommendations, and court judgments for all major religious communities in India, namely, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. Each chapter deals with separate stages of debates, discussions, and complexities involved in the formation and development of personal law in a multicultural and multireligious Indian society. Past heritage of colonial personal law and experiences of legal structures in other developing countries—such as Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran—set the stage for further understanding and conceptualization of the study.

The conceptual blueprint of this book is the author's proposition of "interaction between state-society relations and discourses of community" that in turn shape nation formation and recognition of family law. He argues: "The two crucial explanatory variables, state-