The preamble to India’s 1950 Constitution declares it to be a secular state. Yet, religions play a highly visible role in the Indian public sphere. Furthermore, in spite of the constitutional mandate ("The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India", art. 44), a regime of personal laws - based on religious or customary ground - is actually applied, mostly in matters of family law and group status. The political process is presently re-considering the adoption of a uniform civil code, and the question whether such a solution - long waited for - is more consistent with the principle of constitutional secularism and more respectful to religious pluralism needs to be critically addressed, in a context - like the Indian one - where the balance between constitutional secularism and a deeply religious and plural society has been firmly guaranteed by the Supreme Court.

The current debate in India offers the opportunity to reconsider general categories of constitutional law and comparative models in the light of other relevant [South]Asian experiences and trends, including also perspectives drawing on mainly Islamic contexts. The International Workshop at the Law School in Trento, sponsored by the Research Project on Jurisdiction and Pluralisms, has the purpose of contributing to a better understanding of the political and systemic dynamics of Asian constitutionalism and law as well as the potential for expansion of the rationale of legal pluralism in culturally plural contexts.
**First Session**  
**Thursday 27th April 2017**

15:00-18:00  
Chair: **Roberto Toniatti**  
University of Trento  
**Arun Thiruvengadam**  
Azim Premji University, Bangalore  
The contemporary debate over personal laws in India and its historical and constitutional context.  
**Domenico Francavilla**  
University of Turin  
The complexity of personal laws in India: some issues about application, uniformisation and further pluralisation.  
Coffee Break  
**Chiara Lapi**  
University of Pisa

**Second Session**  
**Friday 28th April 2017**

9:30-12:30  
Chair: **Marco Ventura**  
FBK Trento  
**Arif Jamal**  
National University of Singapore  
The productive potential of personal law regimes and normative legal pluralism.  
**Francesco Alicino**  
LUlSS, Rome  
Freedom of Religion and Religion-Based Personal Laws in Pakistan and Bangladesh.  
Coffee break  
Discussant  
**Domenico Amirante**  
University of Naples 2

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**Arun Thiruvengadam's** paper will focus on providing the historical and constitutional backdrop to the current debate (as this history is often misunderstood) and in its second part will deal with the position of legal pluralism in India within the constitutional vision of greater uniformity as a harbinger of equality especially for women and minority groups within religions who are often victimized and denied the space for reform.

**Domenico Francavilla's** paper will focus on the complexity of the application of personal laws in India (for instance, in cases of conversion) and, on the other hand, on processes of uniformisation or further pluralisation within the current personal laws system.

**Arif Jamal's** paper is going to offer a general view on the personal laws regime in a few countries in South East Asia and will draw out some lessons from Singapore's experience concerning exclusively plural (Muslim) personal law as a comparison with India.

**Francesco Alicino** will deal with the religion-based personal law regime in Bangladesh and Pakistan and will explain how such regime is deeply connected with the nature and texture of freedom of religion and religion-oriented politics in the region and, ultimately, to nationalism.