**National Press Release – to be released across India**

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**Swarna Bharat Party’s position on the Uniform Civil Code**

Mr Sanjay Sonawani, President of Swarna Bharat Party, India’s only liberal party, has lodged the party’s response to the Law Commission’s questionnaire on the uniform civil code (UCC). The response is available on the party’s website (http://bit.ly/2fomZpB).

Unfortunately, Article 44 of the Constitution has become a proxy fight for religious dominance. SBP does not agree with the concept of a UCC as it is commonly understood. The question before us is not be whether we should have a UCC but what is the legitimate role of government (our servant) in the affairs of citizens.

A government’s role in our lives must be limited to minimising or addressing real harm. A government can only step into personal relationships between citizens as a registrar of property rights or of any long term relationships; as an entity that clarifies property rights and enforces them; and as an entity that prescribes and enforces minimum standards of accountability where any physical harm is involved.

Accordingly, just as it is legitimate to establish a minimum age for marriage, SBP believes that it is a legitimate role for the government to set minimum standards regarding personal relationships in matters where harm might otherwise arise (e.g. adoption, maintenance of children and unemployed spouse after divorce, etc.). These standards could also include reasonable minimum requirements on the process of signing up to (or revoking) long term personal relationships: for instance, minimum “time for reflection” for marriage and divorce.

A government can also lay down a standardised set of processes for of marriage or divorce, should people wish to choose such a standardised process. However, it is not the job of government to comment on (leave alone codify) processes prescribed by different religions or cultures in regard to personal relationships, to the extent these processes comply with minimum standards. Religious freedom and freedom of conscience are paramount for a free society; subject to no harm being caused through such freedom.

SBP does not agree with the concept of Directive Principles of State Policy since a Constitution should limit the government’s role and powers and focus on citizens’ fundamental rights. Policy matters should remain the domain of elected governments. The party is also committed to repealing all parliamentary laws that identify or attempt to codify specific religions.

The state and religion must be kept separate at all times. A government must focus on its core functions, not dabble with the personal beliefs of its citizens so long as they do not physically harm others.

*End*

**Notes for Editors**

SBP is India’s only liberal party, committed to defending liberty and promoting prosperity.

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