BLOGS

#MyCLATStory-Journey from being a CLAT Aspirant to an Assistant Professor (Law)

Ruchika Mohapatra · 26 Apr 2023

Sivashrita Bhardwaj is a first-generation lawyer. She is an NLU-O and NLU-D alumna who is currently teaching at SNIL, Odisha. Her journey began in a small town where (a decade back) not many people were aware of NLUs, but today, she has a successful career as an Assistant Professor of Law where she can mentor and guide students towards fulfilling careers and lives.



Tell us a bit about yourself.

I am Sivashrita Bhardwaj. I am an Assistant Professor of Law at SNIL. I graduated from NLU Odisha in 2020 and completed my Constitutional and Criminal Law post graduation from NLU Delhi in 2021. I am a first-generation lawyer.

How did you start your CLAT journey?

I am from a city called Rourkela. Back in 2015, we didn't really have dedicated CLAT coaching centres in the city. So, when it came to preparing for CLAT, I procured some materials and my mentor helped me understand the various aspects of the examination. I had prepared for CLAT in only 1.5 months (right after my XIIth board examination).

My strategy was solving as many mock tests as I could. I took about 2-3 tests a day. I would time myself and be true to the tests. I noticed that with constant practice, my speed and accuracy increased. In 2 hours, I could not only attempt all 200 questions but also had enough time to revise.

To be honest, the 2015 CLAT was super difficult. I had seen so many candidates coming out of the examination centre crying. They had changed the pattern that year. I guess my method of preparation of attempting multiple mocks and analyzing my performance gave me the scope to be flexible and improve my scores. I obtained an AIR of 654 that year.

How were your initial years in law school?

My first semester at law school was not the way I'd pictured it to be. I felt out of place. I wasn't myself. I have always been a serious student but that semester, I couldn't care less about my academics. I scored just 5 GPA out of 8 in that particular semester. I had never scored such less marks in my entire career. That was my wakeup call.

The next semester, I worked really hard and along with another person, I topped my batch with a GPA of 7.67 out of 8. I also ended up making great friends. From thereon, my life at law school became amazing! The journey was no less than a rollercoaster ride but oh boy, what a fulfilling journey it was! I can safely say that those were the best 5 years of my life and I would love to relive them if I could.

What motivated you to pursue law as a career?

My class teacher of Standard VIII advised my mother regarding integrated law. I researched about it and I found the course and the career options very intriguing. I was interested in getting into the corporate law sphere. However, my interest changed while in law school.

My friends and teachers advised me to get into academia as they thought that I am good at teaching and legal research. I took up the position of a teaching assistant in my 8th semester and

taught General Defences under IPC to the then 2nd years. It was the best, most fulfilling experience I had in law school and it was then that I decided of getting into academia.

Tell us a bit about your experience while taking CLAT LLM. How was that experience different from the time you took CLAT UG?

I took CLAT LLM in 2020. This time, I took AILET too. Again, in 2020, they changed the question paper pattern. I had gotten an AIR of 231 in CLAT and had gotten into WBNUJS but because I wanted to get into NLU Delhi, I withdrew my candidature from WBNUJS and joined NLU Delhi when I found out that I had cleared AILET as well. The experience was different in terms of the examination. While CLAT UG was mostly aptitude based (as students from various streams take the examination), CLAT PG tested our knowledge of law.

What were your top 3 sources of information for CLAT? Did you prepare for CLAT all by yourself?

My top three sources for CLAT were: books, Lawctopus, and my notes. I prepared for CLAT all by myself. As helpful, convenient, and beneficial as coaching is, in my humble opinion, you don't need coaching in order to clear CLAT. There is no substitute for self study. As an aspirant, your priority should be self study. Coaching should be in addition- just for practice or doubt clearing.

What would you say sets apart your #CLATStory from others?

I guess being from a family in which I am the first lawyer, I didn't get any guidance from anyone. As already mentioned, I prepared for CLAT all by myself. Also, I believe in practicing A LOT of question papers which helped me in enhancing my speed and accuracy. So, all in all, I guess my method of preparation was different.

Any advice you'd like to pass on to law school aspirants and law students?

My advice to law aspirants can be summed up in word- practice. I cannot emphasize enough on the importance of self study and practicing papers. Do not get disheartened if you score less in your mock tests.

Make all the mistakes in your tests, learn from your mistakes, and do not repeat them in your actual examination. Keep yourself away from people who are negative and have a “can’t do” attitude. Surround yourself with people who believe in you, inspire you, and motivate you.

My advice to law students- Law isn’t a bed of roses. I won’t say it’s super easy. If anything, it’s taxing- physically and mentally. Make sure that you take care of your health (including your mental health). And, study! We’re in a profession wherein we have to study for the rest of our lives, irrespective of which career option we opt for.

Make reading a habit. Stay updated on the legal happenings in the country. Write papers. Take part in moot court competitions. Enjoy and experience all that law school has to offer. Do not get distracted- the age that you’re in, you need to focus on your priorities. That being said, have fun too. Work hard, play hard.

This interview is a part of our series #MyCLATStory where we interview law students and legal professionals.

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