BLOGS

INTERVIEW: Srivaishnav Kandula, 1st Year Student at DSNLU on CLAT, Courts & Comebacks

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The interview is conducted by Jessica Benita Immanuel, a 2nd-year BA LLB student at Christ Academy Institute of Law and a student editor at Lawctopus.



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Could you take us back to the moment when the CLAT results were declared what was your immediate reaction?

When the CLAT results were declared, I was honestly shocked. I had expected a much worse rank, so seeing my actual result felt surprising in a good way. It took me a moment to really process it, because I had mentally prepared myself for disappointment. At the same time, I felt happy and relieved.

My score gave me a real chance to get into an NLU, which had been my goal throughout my preparation. It felt like all the effort I had put in was finally paying off. More than anything, I felt proud of myself. I knew how hard I had worked, especially during the stressful days leading up to the exam.

Seeing the result made me feel that my consistency and effort were worth it. The first thing I did after checking my result was call my parents. I wanted to share the news with them immediately, and it was a really special moment for me.

How did the legal challenge against the Consortium of National Law Universities impact your perspective as an aspirant entering the legal field?

It had a great impact on my perspective as an aspirant entering the legal field. It was one of the first real instances where I saw how law operates as a tool to question authority and seek accountability.

It was a bit unsettling but made me realise that even well established institutions can be scrutinised by the courts and that systems can be fallible. At the same time, it showed me the importance of legal remedies and the role of courts in addressing grievances.

Overall it increased my interest in law. It gave me a more practical understanding of how laws play out in real life.

Do you believe the Consortium’s current rechecking and grievance redressal mechanisms are adequate? Why or why not?

In my opinion, the Consortium’s current rechecking and grievance redressal mechanisms are not entirely adequate. There is a formal grievance portal in place but it often feels like it exists more for the sake of procedure rather than for meaningful resolution. Many students raise genuine concerns, but a large number of these grievances appear to be disregarded or not addressed in a transparent manner.

This creates a sense of frustration among aspirants, especially considering how important the examination is for their future. In its current form, the system does not seem to fully achieve the purpose.

There is definitely scope for improvement, particularly in terms of responsiveness, transparency, and giving due consideration to student concerns. Overall, the mechanism is a step in the right direction but it does not yet inspire full confidence among aspirants.

Preparing for CLAT is an intense process. How did you cope with the emotional and mental strain when the results did not reflect your expectations?

Preparing for CLAT can be mentally demanding, but in my case, I was relatively satisfied with the result I received. While it may not have fully matched every expectation, I felt that it fairly reflected my preparation and effort. What affected me more was the legal developments that followed.

I was quite encouraged by the judgment of the Delhi High Court, as it gave hope for a more favourable outcome. However, when I later learned that the decision had been largely reversed by the Supreme Court, it was disappointing.

I did feel low for a few days after that, mainly because of the shift in expectations. But over time, I accepted the situation and made peace with it. I realised that beyond a point, such factors are outside one’s control, and it is more important to focus on the opportunities that still remain.

Overall, while there were moments of disappointment, I remained content with my result and chose to move forward with a practical mindset.

Did the controversy ever make you question your decision to pursue law as a career?

The controversy did not make me question my decision to pursue law as a career. However, it did create a lot of uncertainty and stress during that period. I found myself going back and forth emotionally, mainly because I did not know how the court’s judgment would ultimately impact my result.

The delay in the judicial process added to this uncertainty. Since the outcome was unclear for a considerable time, it was difficult to stay completely calm and focused. Like many other aspirants, I was closely following the developments and trying to understand what it could mean for me.

That said, my decision to pursue law remained firm throughout. I was already studying in a private law college, and I was determined to move to a National Law University, as they offer better academic exposure and opportunities.

In the end, while the situation was stressful, it did not shake my long-term commitment to the legal field. Instead, it reinforced my desire to move forward and make the most of better opportunities.

How did your support system family, mentors, or peers play a role during this uncertain phase?

My support system played a very important role during this uncertain phase. My family, in particular, was extremely supportive throughout. They did not just offer emotional support but also actively tried to explore possible legal remedies. At one point, they even encouraged me to consider filing a writ petition before the Karnataka High Court.

My parents went to the extent of consulting lawyers to understand whether a writ could be filed in the given situation, especially considering the alleged errors in the Consortium's answer key. I was quite close to filing the petition.

However, around the same time, the Delhi High Court delivered its judgment in a case where the same questions were already being challenged by Aditya Singh. Since the issues I intended to raise were being addressed in that matter, my lawyer advised me that filing a separate petition would not be effective and could lead to unnecessary expenditure without any different outcome.

Based on this advice, I decided not to proceed. Alongside my family, my friends also played a crucial role. They supported me emotionally, spent time with me, and helped me stay positive during a stressful period. Looking back, I truly value their support and, in many ways, I miss those moments and the time I spent with them.

Overall, the encouragement and guidance I received from both my family and friends helped me stay grounded and navigate the situation with more clarity.

In hindsight, do you think CLAT fairly evaluates a student's aptitude for legal education?

In my opinion, CLAT does not fully or fairly evaluate a student's aptitude for legal education. While it tests important areas such as English comprehension, logical reasoning, legal reasoning, and basic mathematics, these sections only assess a limited set of skills. Legal education requires much more than the ability to perform well in an objective examination.

Skills like articulation, argumentation, research ability, and even interpersonal communication play a significant role in shaping a good law student and future legal professional.

These aspects are not adequately captured in the current format of the exam. Additionally, the high-stakes nature of a single examination means that a student's performance on one particular day can disproportionately affect their chances, which may not always reflect their true potential.

To make the process more holistic, the current system could be supplemented with additional components. For instance, a short written assessment could help evaluate a student's ability to structure arguments and express ideas clearly.

Interviews or group discussions could also provide insight into a candidate's communication skills, reasoning ability, and overall interest in the field of law. Overall, it should ideally be combined with other methods of evaluation to better assess a student's suitability for legal education.

Can you walk us through how you eventually secured admission into Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University?

After the Supreme Court delivered its decision, the revised CLAT results were released. To my surprise, my result took a worse turn than I had initially expected. This made me quite uncertain about my chances of securing admission into a National Law University.

For some time, I was skeptical about whether I would be able to make it to an NLU at all. However, I decided to stay patient and continue with the counselling process. In the second allotment list, I was offered a seat at Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University (DSNLU).

That moment was a huge relief for me. Despite all the uncertainty and changes in my result, I was finally able to secure admission into an NLU. Looking back, the entire process was unpredictable,

but it ultimately worked out in my favour.

What was that moment like for you did it feel like vindication, relief, or something else entirely?

A wave of Euphoria hit me. I was extremely happy to have secured admission into a National Law University, especially after all the uncertainty that came with the revised results and the legal developments. More than anything, it reassured me that my efforts had not gone in vain.

The preparation phase had been intense, and there were moments when the outcome felt unpredictable, so getting into an NLU felt deeply satisfying. At the same time, there was a strong sense of relief. The entire process had been stressful, and finally having clarity about my admission lifted a significant burden.

My parents were also very happy, which made the moment even more meaningful for me. Seeing their reaction added to my own sense of satisfaction. I am conscious of the fact that there is always scope to aim higher however I was content with where I had reached. For me, it was not just about the institution, but about the journey and the fact that I had achieved what I set out to do.

Has this experience influenced the way you view legal institutions and accountability?

Yes, this experience has definitely influenced the way I view legal institutions and accountability. It made me realise that while legal institutions are essential for maintaining order and justice, they are not free from flaws or criticism. Going through this process showed me that even established bodies can make errors, and that accountability is crucial at every level.

It highlighted the importance of questioning decisions and using legal remedies to address grievances when necessary. At the same time, it also strengthened my faith in the legal system to some extent. Despite the delays and uncertainty, there was still a structured process through which issues were raised and examined.

It showed me that the law provides mechanisms, even if they are not always perfect in their functioning. Overall, the experience gave me a more balanced perspective. I now see legal

institutions as both necessary and fallible, and I better understand the importance of accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement within the system.

If you had the opportunity to suggest reforms to the CLAT system, what would be your top recommendations?

If I had the opportunity to suggest reforms to the CLAT system, my primary focus would be on making the process more transparent, fair, and holistic. First, there should be greater accountability in the setting of question papers and answer keys.

The Consortium should ensure stricter review mechanisms before releasing the provisional key, and grievances raised by students must be addressed in a more reasoned and transparent manner. Second, the grievance redressal system needs to be strengthened. Instead of being a largely formal process, it should actively engage with student concerns and provide clear explanations for accepting or rejecting objections.

Third, the evaluation process could be made more comprehensive. While the current format tests important skills, it does not fully capture a student's aptitude for legal education. Introducing a short written component could help assess analytical thinking and the ability to structure arguments.

Additionally, reducing the excessive dependence on a single high-stakes examination would make the system more balanced. Supplementing CLAT with interviews or other assessment methods could provide a more complete picture of a candidate's abilities. These reforms could make CLAT a more reliable and effective system for selecting candidates suited for legal education.

What advice would you give to future CLAT aspirants who might face similar uncertainties?

My advice to future CLAT aspirants would be to focus on what is within your control and not get overwhelmed by uncertainties that are beyond it. The preparation phase can be intense, and situations like result revisions or legal challenges may add to the stress. However, it is important to stay consistent with your efforts and not lose confidence in your preparation. At the same time, be mentally prepared for unpredictability.

The process may not always be smooth, and outcomes may not always match expectations. Accepting this early on can help you handle such situations with a clearer and calmer mindset.

It is also important to have a strong support system. Staying connected with family, friends, or mentors can make a significant difference during stressful periods. Most importantly, do not let temporary setbacks define your journey. There are multiple paths within the legal field, and one result does not determine your entire future. Staying patient, adaptable, and focused will help you move forward, regardless of the challenges you face.

Conclusion

This story is more than just about an exam it is about resilience in the face of institutional uncertainty, the lived reality of legal processes, and the quiet determination to keep moving forward. In many ways, this journey reflects what studying law truly means: not just understanding systems, but enduring them, questioning them, and ultimately, growing through them.