BLOGS

In conversation with Dr. Aaratrika Pandey (Jamia Milia Islamia, TISS Mumbai, and NLUO)

Ruchika Mohapatra · 28 Aug 2023

In conversation with Dr. Aaratrika Pandey (Jamia Milia Islamia, TISS Mumbai, and NLUO) on her venture into the domain of law as well as her journey from being a law student to being an Assistant Professor of Law.



Tell us a bit about yourself.

My name is Dr. Aaratrika Pandey. I completed my undergraduate in law from Faculty of Law, Jamia Milia Islamia and my postgraduation from TISS, Mumbai. I then pursued my PhD from NLU-Odisha and currently, I am working as an Assistant Professor of Law at Karnavati University.

I am a dedicated person with a passion for educating today's youth, and helping to support them academically, emotionally, and socially in the classroom. Beyond my professional life, I am deeply ardent about doodling, reading and writing poetry, cooking, and keeping up to date with fiction

and crime series.

My research interests lie at the intersection of law and social sciences, where I aim to explore the dynamic interplay between legal frameworks and societal dynamics. This interdisciplinary approach allows me to delve into the intricate relationships between legal systems, cultural norms, and human behaviour, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex issues our society faces.

In the realm of law and social sciences, I am particularly drawn to the following research areas like, Gender Studies and Law, LGBTQIA+ rights, Human Rights and Access to Justice, Criminal Justice and Social Behaviour, Victimology and Social Justice.

Through my research, I aspire to bridge the gap between theory and practice, promoting meaningful dialogue between legal professionals, policymakers, and social scientists. By adopting an interdisciplinary lens, I hope to contribute valuable insights that not only enrich academic scholarship but also inform real-world solutions to some of the most pressing challenges our society faces.

How did you start your journey in the field of law?

My passion to make a change led me to pursue law inspired me to obtain a Bachelor of Law degree from Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. It not only helped me creating a strong base but also sparked my interest in learning more about law.

One of the pivotal moments was obtaining a LL.M degree in Access to Justice from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. The place taught me intersectionality of law and society, which enhanced my knowledge and research skills.

I recently completed my Ph.D. from National Law University Odisha. Each step, from academic pursuits to practical experiences, has shaped my understanding of the law’s impact on individuals and communities.

As I continue on this journey, I’m dedicated to making a meaningful difference through teaching, legal advocacy, fostering positive change, and upholding the principles that initially inspired me to enter this field.

How were your initial years in the law school?

Frankly speaking, initial years were really tough as I came from Science background. With time I starting coping up with the pressure which any law school brings into your life. It took me long time to make peer study group. After that everything fell into place.

What motivated you to pursue law as a career?

My interest in social justice and the influence of the legal system on society led me to pursue a career in law. The thought of utilizing the law as an instrument to bring positive change and deal with issues of equality and equity appealed to me. I was just a person, who always wanted to make this world a better place.

Tell us a bit about your experience while taking the entrance test for admission into LLM courses. How was that experience different from the time you took the entrance test for UG?

My experience of entrance test for admission into LL.M. was totally different from UG courses. Somewhere the entrance for UG course felt more tough than the later one. As for LL.M. entrance exam, I was more focused, had legal knowledge, research skills and most importantly patience and courage to accept failure. Having said that, I did get the admission in one go.

What were your top 3 sources of information while preparing for the law entrance exam? Did you prepare for the exam all by yourself?

Yes, I did prepare for the exams myself. My top 3 sources of information were: 1. Newspaper 2. Bare Acts 3. Books

What led you to pursue a career in academia and become an Assistant Professor?

In today’s world where people become accidental teachers, I would like to tell you that since childhood I dreamt of becoming an Educator. I just had a passion and desire for teaching and contributing to the society. Educators in academia have the chance to positively influence

students' lives. Mentoring, advising, and guiding students can be incredibly satisfying. While academia can be demanding, it often provides more flexibility in terms of work hours and research direction compared to some other career paths.

What challenges have you faced as an Assistant Professor, and how have you addressed them?

Being an Assistant Professor comes with its own set of challenges, but with the right strategies and approaches, these challenges can be overcome. Here are some challenges I faced.

Firstly, balancing teaching, research, administrative tasks, and personal life can be overwhelming. Prioritize tasks, create a weekly schedule, and allocate dedicated time for each responsibility.

Learn to say no to additional commitments when necessary. Delegate administrative tasks when possible. Use time management techniques such as the Pomodoro Technique to maintain focus. Set clear boundaries for work and personal time. Utilize technology tools like calendar apps to organize your schedule.

Addressing diverse student needs, managing large classes, and maintaining student engagement is another problem I faced. I used active learning strategies to keep students engaged. Encouraged student interaction through discussions and group activities. I used pedagogy like storytelling and flip classroom. I believe in being approachable and open to student feedback.

Last but not the least the workload and pressure can lead to stress and burnout. Practice self-care through exercise, mindfulness, and hobbies. Take breaks and vacations to recharge.

Seek support from mentors, peers, or counsellors if needed. Remember that challenges are an inherent part of any profession, and overcoming them requires a combination of planning, adaptability, and perseverance. It's also essential to build a strong support network of colleagues, mentors, and friends to help you navigate these challenges successfully.

What would you say sets apart your story from others?

I believe all individuals have their own path to follow and hence each and every story is beautiful in their own way. Mine was little bit different as majority of my learnings happened in my Academic institutions but outside the classrooms.

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

Focus on your strengths, Weakness, your physical and mental health and food. Enjoy this journey as much as you can. Be the change you want to see in the world.

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

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