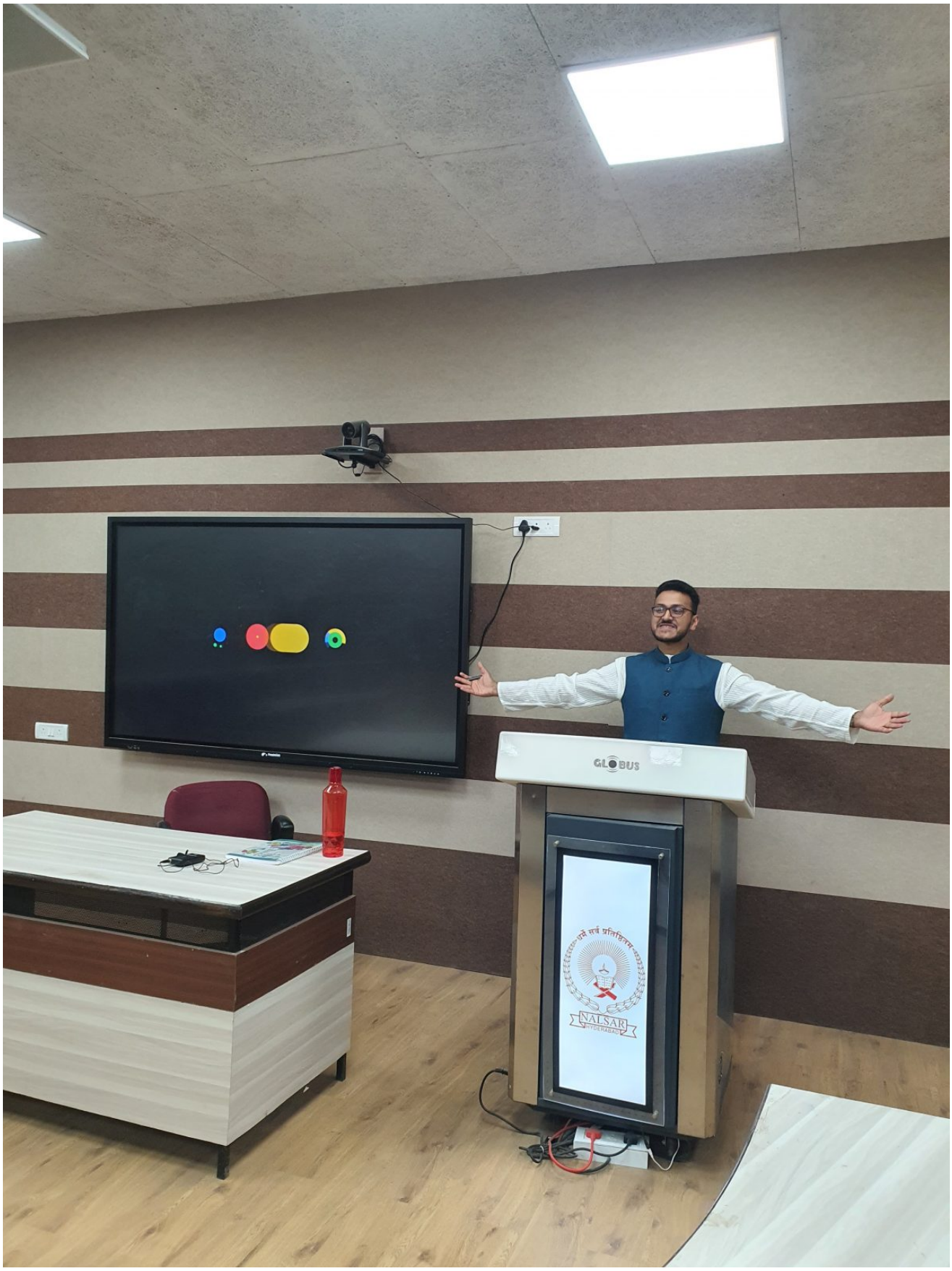
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In Conversation with Harsh Mahaseth (NALSAR, NUS) on his Journey into the Domain of Law

Ruchika Mohapatra · 18 Aug 2023

In Conversation with Harsh Mahaseth on his journey in the domain of law and his law school life at NALSAR and the National University of Singapore!


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Tell us a bit about yourself.

My name is Harsh Mahaseth and I am a Nepalese citizen currently working as an Assistant Professor and Assistant Dean at Jindal Global Law School, O.P. Jindal Global University, India.



I completed my LLM (Asian Legal Studies) from the National University of Singapore and my B.A., LL.B. (Hons.) from NALSAR University of Law, India. I have taken a sabbatical from Jindal and will be pursuing my MPhil from the University of Cambridge.

What motivated you to pursue law as a career?

As a high school student, I did not have much planned out for my future. I was content with playing basketball, computer games and scoring decent grades in school. Everything started to change once I participated in a Model United Nations Conference in 2013.

This change began not by me participating as a delegate, but from a closing ceremony speech that stuck with me and inspired me to pursue a career in International Relations. The former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kul Chandra Gautam, had given a closing speech for the Model United Nations Conference in which he eloquently spoke about the intricacies of actually working in the United Nations, lamented its idealistic approach to handling crises and paradoxically championed the idealism of the UN in its dream of a world governed by total peace.

This speech was the turning point for me as I grew more interested in international law and international relations. A year later I joined NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad, India to further a career in this area. I then went on to pursue my Master of Laws (LL.M) in Asian Legal Studies from the National University of Singapore.

I worked in academia for a few years and now I am returning as a student for an MPhil from the University of Cambridge, aiming to contribute to Asian legal studies and international relations research.

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

My journey into the field of law, especially in India, was a fateful encounter. Initially, I aspired to study International Relations and had secured admission to a good university in the US for that.

However, my family preferred me to stay closer to home and pursue something they were comfortable with. Since International Relations was an unfamiliar area, I chose to study law. Rather than pursuing law in the US, I decided on India, and that’s how I ended up studying law at NALSAR.

How were your initial years in the law school?

When I joined law school I was lost as to what I should be doing. I had not given CLAT since I am a Nepalese citizen and my law school had a SAARC quota which allowed me to get admission on the basis of my 12th grades.

My batchmates were very proactive during classes. Within a week at law school, I had an inferiority complex. The first two years were filled with really bad grades and I did not feel like working at all. While most of my batchmates were participating in moots and undertaking corporate internships, I was not sure what I wanted to do.



What brought about a change for me was my passion for writing. Even in the first year, I had written a research paper for a law journal. I was ecstatic to see my work being published; however, I did overhear my batchmates talking about how it was not a reputed journal and that they would write for superior journals and do better. This hit me hard, as I realized that many of my batchmates considered all of these activities as a rat race.

It took me a while to realize that I should continue doing what I love and not bother with a “race”. I continued focusing on my own self-development and kept on writing. While everyone compared batch ranks and competed for internships at top law firms, I realized that my interest was in the area of research.

My research and writing skills helped me publish several research papers, win numerous accolades and also helped me gain admission in top universities around the world. In third year when I received an award in Singapore for my research, it was then that I slowly began to realize that I am doing some good work and my confidence started to build.

I think I actually became fully confident in myself in the fourth year when I had returned from a moot court competition in Japan and instead of negative comments behind my back I started

hearing people talk good about me and actually coming to me for advice. Through my hard work, I believe I have started to see results, and I am proud of my achievements

What would you say sets apart your story from others?

My focus on research and writing from my first year at law school stands out. I completed all of my research projects well within the deadline and had a really fun routine (classes or free time until 5 PM, basketball or football until 7 PM, have dinner and then sit in the library to either work on my research projects or write articles).

I feel many people in my batch remember me as the person who completed his assignments well before the deadline (this is true), or the person who was always in the library (this is not), or maybe even the batchmate who always came to class with a notebook and a water bottle (very astonishing to see such few students carrying water bottles)!

Any advice you'd like to pass on to law school aspirants and law students?
Five years can pass by quickly. Stick to what you enjoy, and follow your passions. Create a routine that incorporates both your academic pursuits and personal interests. Travel whenever possible, and embrace opportunities for growth.

The five years can go by in a flash. I had a policy that I would try to travel every semester, whether it be for a competition, conference, or internship. I stuck to that policy and did visit quite a few cities and even some other countries! I also stuck to what I love doing (writing) and continued writing and publishing my work, and also continued to play basketball nearly every day. So, my advice to others would be to continue doing what you enjoy.

Well, I'm not sure where I heard this first and there would be many people who would have said something like this, but my version of it which I have told many people is "Why not give it a try? The most you might spend on making an application for a conference or an LLM is a few hours or days. If you don't get accepted then that is a few hours/days of effort which you can use to learn. But, what if you do get accepted? Then it will all be worth it. So just try, and you never know what might happen".

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

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