BLOGS

Dr. Rhea Roy Mammen (NLS, Leiden University) on her Journey in the Field of Law

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In this Conversation with CLATalogue, Dr. Rhea Roy Mammen (NLS, Leiden University) talks about her motivation to join the field of law as well as her life within and beyond the walls of various law schools.



Tell us a bit about yourself.

My name is Dr. Rhea Roy Mammen. I am an Affiliated Researcher at Leiden University, Faculty of Law and Director of Research Development Institute, Jusfocus Research Institute at Leiden, Netherlands. Academia was my passion, and having worked in academia for close to a decade, I moved to be an academic entrepreneur in the Netherlands.

I had cleared CLAT PG with AIR 29 and completed both my LLM as well as PhD from NLSIU. I was also a part of NLS, Bengaluru for various National and International Projects such as India's response to Climate Change, Paris Convention, UNDP project on Biodiversity, NCW project on Women's Reproductive Rights etc.

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

My journey in the field of law was heavily inspired by and started on seeing my mom who is a criminal lawyer. Though in 2008, I did take an attempt at cracking the CLAT, my rank was in 3000s, and that wouldn't have gotten me a seat.

Though I was confident that if I had taken another attempt at CLAT I would have made it, I didn't do so because I just wanted to start studying law. That was a great decision, in hindsight, because I secured rank 8 in the CAT, CUSAT entrance. There on, the exposure in the University shaped my thoughts especially on interdisciplinary nature of Law.

How were your initial years in the law school?

Remarkable is the one word for it! Law School experience in terms of discussions in class rooms to the interaction with the various centers was just remarkable. I was fortunate to receive the Linnaeus Palme Fellowship to Sweden in Environmental Law, which made it double amazing.

This gave me an opportunity to experience the best of both the worlds. I was associated with CCL and CEERA during my time in NLS, where I had the opportunity to work on different projects. As I was pursuing my Masters in Human Rights Law, these exposures were very beneficial to me.

Though I did have the opportunity to interact with Prof. Madhava Menon and Prof. Shamnad Basheer during my initial graduation days, NLS definitely gave me more opportunities. To witness such eminent academic personalities make a difference was a driving force to do something of my own in the field of legal research and legal education.

Of the lot, I especially love the way NLS was accommodative to the dogs in the campus. Being a pet lover, that was definitely a plus point!

What motivated you to pursue law as a career?

My Mom, and the desire to be the change were primary factors that motivated me to pursue law. I was definitely more motivated to see my mom and her bold persona and I believe it had a lot to do with her choice of career. Though she was into litigation, I chose academia because of the potential it has to contribute to the domain of law.

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?

In UG, we had a combination of Logical Reasoning, Math, basics of laws, English and GK in the syllabus. But when it came to PG, it was more to see how well you had done the five year course.

In 2013, negative marking and essay were the mode of assessment. And I prepared for CLAT PG exam from the notes that I had made during my UG. CLAT PG, in my opinion, is all about having a grip over your basics and knowledge of different concepts of law. I relied a lot on the Bare Acts and case laws, which was very helpful.

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

I prepared for the exams myself though I did wish I had someone to discuss it with. To prepare for the exam, I used the following resources:

1. LLB notes – Bare Acts, and case laws were my go to point.
2. Essays were about critically analyzing – requiring to be updated with the information from different portals
3.Textbooks, especially for constitution, jurisprudence, because they were basic areas for essays.

What would you say sets apart your story from others?

What sets apart my story from others is acing CLAT with out any external support and the fact that through the experience with CLAT, I was able to get through UGC NET in my first attempt and move on to my PhD again, in the very first attempt!

Finally I ended up in the Netherlands working on legal research. It all started with the consistency and discipline of 30 mins a day mantra. Beyond all, the desire to make an impact in the domain of Legal Research and Legal Education is what makes my story so different from others.

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

Be diligent with your classroom learning! It is your primary responsibility and that also speaks of your discipline and dedication. Once you do that, a law exam won't just be a law exam, it will be just another day, giving way to outstanding results!

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

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