AILET

Law School, the Pandemic and the Inheritance of Loss

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Inheritance of Loss, you wonder…what's a famous novel got to do with law school during the time of Covid? Well, a lot, actually. The story is centered around living in two different worlds, what was and what is. This is quite akin to what every student is experiencing these days, isn't it? Or perhaps it is more complex for the latter- stuck in the present and hoping to breathe life into the past for a brighter future.

Who would have thought?

An extended Holi break turning into a long vacation which was a nice change of pace for law students. Studying from home, more time for internships, research work and then Diwali came. And another semester, or for some, simply the end of student life without any warning and reality hit. All those dreams of spending the holidays interning at a law firm or writing that perfect research paper remained just that, dreams.

For the reality was and is much different. Six hours of online lectures followed by extra classes and then assignments. Eyes that would wander towards the phone screen lighting up during physical classes beg for a break now. Alas, how do you mass bunk an online class?

And it is not like students do not want to study. It's just that they do not have the mental bandwidth for it. With so much going on around them, there's heightened levels of anxiety, stress, and this feeling of being overburdened mentally is sure to take a toll on one's mental health and simply, concentration levels. And your focus is bound to falter when you see your relatives or friends' families lose their battle to Covid-19.

When you're grieving, even for others (for that's only human), can an online class or a deadline of an assignment really feel that significant? And what about the constant fear this riles up for the health of our own loved ones? Older parents, a younger sibling…there's too much to worry about, take care of and feel constantly dejected for not being able to do enough. Yet, your home where you curl into your bed to feel safe is now a place where your laptop forcefully resides.



You'd think online classes would be easier. But no, it simply means that the most absurd of ways will be invented to mark attendance- from active class participation to a software calculating the time you were present (ask Chandigarh University- a second less and you're absent). Did we stop to think about those nursing themselves or their families back to health? Or maybe one simply lives in an area with bad internet connectivity, or worse, internet clampdowns by the government. Since when did education become a luxury? One that could be afford only by those who are geographically well located. Or have high speed internet cables laid in their area.

Don't get me wrong. Not all law schools are bad (except NLS, SLS Noida, ADYPU Pune etc) who are still forcing students to give exams. Some without even any preparatory breaks. Or law schools that are still charging exorbitantly high fees in full. Can we please take a moment to think about those who might have lost the only bread-winner in their families or those who are unwell or can simply cannot make sense of what is happening in the world and are too tired to deal with any of it?

This is not to say that law students have been left on their own. Some faculty members in various law schools are incredibly supportive in these turbulent times but even they, after one point, feel bound by the policies framed by their respective management. And when things are online, let's face it, Zoom cannot replace the warmth of a face to face conversation. In such a situation, you

are bound to feel like you are all alone.

But truly, you are not. Everyone is in the same boat- losing out on internships or in some cases, not even being paid. And it is sad to come to terms with that reality. We would all have preferred one more moot court or one more night to dance at the cultural fest or simply the chance to hang out on campus with friends. And one day, it will return, in one way or another. For those graduating soon, it may come in the form of colleagues who are just as dear to you as your batchmates, but it will. You might not get to argue a moot competition but you might get to judge one. For nothing in life is permanent, not even a global pandemic.

So for those of you reading this- we may be down but we are not out. And for those in positions of authority, a little empathy goes a long way in healing lost souls.

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