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Why Not Going To An NLU Was The Best Thing That Happened To Me

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Yes, I know. You might be looking at the heading and wondering ‘what is wrong with this person?’. And you may be right. Over 60,000 students appear for the CLAT exam every year. Their hope? To get that coveted NLU tag and here is someone advocating the complete opposite. Well, not really. I have nothing against NLUs. Certainly, the ones who truly want to study in a National Law University, I’d advise them to go after it. I was one of them, afterall.

But before telling you the ‘why’ of it, let me take you back a little further in time to tell you how it started, with a typical Indian neighbour advising my mother about what I should do with my career. I was a Commerce student and my neighbour told my mother, “why not have her do B.Com/LL.B. instead of just B.Com?”. Her daughter was a year senior to me and was doing B.Com LL.B..

So my mother suggested the idea of a dual degree to me. At that point, I didn’t know what I really wanted to do, so I just went with it thinking, “Sure, why not?” And so began my 4 weeks crash course into cracking the law entrance that I previously hadn’t even heard of. Literally, I didn’t even know NLUs existsted, let alone the pattern of the exam or anything else for that matter.

I joined one of the most prestigious coaching chains in India. On the very first day of coaching, a serendipitous thing happened- I fell in love. I fell in love with law as a subject. Something I couldn’t have imagined even in my wildest dreams. I mean, it’s LAW!

So, CLAT came and went. And to my surprise, I aced it. Not enough to get into, say, the top 3 NLUs but enough to get into the top 5. I was so excited. Because I was born and raised in Chandigarh, the very idea of pursuing my studies in a field that I loved and in a different city seemed so tantalising. I would have the chance to start afresh, make new friends, have the kind of ‘cool’ life you see in movies.

But all my hopes were dashed when I cleared another entrance test for the 5 year law program at Panjab University, just a few kilometers away from my place. And of course, that was the end of

my NLU dreams because let's face it- how many parents will really allow their daughters to go to a different city, alone to pursue their studies? I'm guessing not enough because I wasn't one of them. Plus my parents gave me compelling reasons – lower costs, convenience and more. And since I have no legal background whatsoever, it wasn't easy to explain to them the significance of the 'NLU' tag. Quite frankly, I am not sure I understood it myself. It was just something other students, who had been preparing for a year or two, (sometimes even three) constantly raved about. So someone like me, who has always been at the top of the class, simply thought that this was all there was- to get into an NLU. If people worked years to get into a place, it must surely mean something. Right?

Wrong.

Turns out, going to an NLU might not have worked out well for me. Here's why.



Once I was in UILS, Punjab University, I worked really hard for the first two semesters. I was not from a legal background, which meant I had to work extra hard to make it in this field. But I never wanted to be a lawyer or a judge or work a fancy corporate job. I was constantly asking myself why was I doing this to myself.

So one day I just came back home and cried. Really cried. Why did I go to law school in the first place? And the answer was clear- simply for the love of the subject. I never came here with the hopes of securing a lucrative placement or a government job. I was pursuing law for the love of it. And there were other things I loved- like public speaking, writing, participating in contests. That's

when I decided I was going to do all of that and more.

I started mooting and travelled to various parts of India and made friends from other law schools, including NLUs.

During these experiences I realised one thing- if I had gone to an NLU, I would possibly not have had the time to do all the things that I wanted to do. NLUs are great, but there is also a greater focus on the academic aspects of it, and other activities that align with the academics. But in other law schools, you get a greater degree of freedom. I was attending college, interning with a marketing agency and working for a US based client. I set up my own lifestyle website and started blogging while never letting my academic performance suffer. My grades were always in the top 5 in my class and that was because I never put myself under pressure . In fact, my other experiences only helped me land all sorts of work – as a freelancer with various companies, curating content for different brands; and, now here, doing what I love the most- writing (and giving advice to others :P).

Who would have thought, right? Going to an NLU was what I wanted. But turns out, it certainly wasn't what I needed. Life has a funny way of working out on its own, as long as you keep going and putting in your best efforts.

P.S. I also appeared for the CLAT PG exam last year, on a whim, and aced that; however, to ultimately go to a private university and finish my LLM. But that's a story for another time. □□

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