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In Conversation with Shivani Mamgain (NLUO): Assistant Professor who uses Social Media to Guide Law Students

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In this conversation with CLATalogue, Shivani Mamgain talks about her journey as a law student, her stint as an Assistant Professor and a mentor harnessing the power of social media to guide law students.



Tell us a bit about yourself.

I’m Shivani Mamgain. I did my BBA LLB from Symbiosis International (Deemed) University, and my LLM in Constitutional and Administrative Law from National Law University, Odisha. Currently, I am working as an Assistant Professor of Law (Contractual) at my alma mater-

National Law University Odisha.

While I have taught various courses, this semester I am really looking forward to teaching a seminar course, which so happens to be the first course I have ever designed: “Law and Queerness”. I also run a small Instagram page “judiciarygram” where I try to provide free support to any law student or aspirant in whatever capacity I can. One of my life goals is to make legal education accessible and inclusive.

How did you start your CLAT journey?

Like every Law aspirant in India, I gave the CLAT UG examination. Based on the universities I got into, I chose to join Symbiosis International (Deemed) University. By the end of the second year, I realized litigation was not for me and that eliminated one option for me.

Trying to figure out what to do next, and influenced by my upbringing, I thought I must go for a government job and started preparing for the judicial services examination. When the pandemic hit, the exams kept on getting postponed. Over time my inclination started shifting towards teaching and making legal education more accessible and it was then that I decided to appear for CLAT LLM exam.

How were your initial years in law school?

I was lost in the initial years. Despite being a science student, I took up BBA LLB and most of my time in the library was spent studying BBA subjects rather than law. I was also involved with a couple of NGOs and in several extra-curriculars. This took up too much of my time. Thankfully, I was always attentive during my lectures, and actively took part in discussions if I could.

I also diligently took notes of my readings and lectures. Most importantly, I had a very supportive peer group and we helped each other through the academic struggles we all face in law school. There were ups and downs, but with the support of my peers and faculty, I sailed through the calm and stormy waters of law school.

What motivated you to pursue law as a career?

Honestly, I ended up choosing law by chance. When I was growing up, there weren’t any lawyers around me, so I had no exposure to the legal field. Initially, I had chosen the science stream with

the intention of studying biology. However, the stress of preparing for medical entrance exams became overwhelming, and I eventually decided to drop the subject altogether.

During that time, a family friend of my father, who was studying law, used to visit us frequently. I remember having discussions with him, where he would ask practical questions related to his legal studies. These conversations sparked my interest and curiosity in the field of law. Additionally, my active participation in youth parliaments and debates during my school years further influenced my decision to pursue a career in law.

Tell us a bit about your experience while taking CLAT LLM. How was that experience different from the time you took CLAT UG?

For preparing for CLAT UG, my main focus was on current affairs and GK, and I had not yet realized the importance of solving papers, probably that's why I did not get a satisfactory rank in CLAT. I gave the CLAT LLM during the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a new pattern. I focused on the syllabus and the pattern of sample paper.

I primarily studied important judgments, and followed the news to assess what all judgments might be relevant for the exam. By this time I had improved my strategy. I solved papers regularly and reviewed my answers. I then followed up by working on what I felt I needed to work more on. I feel that during my CLAT LLM I was more organized, strategic, and consistent. That helped me get into a University I was excited to go to.

What were your top 3 sources of information for CLAT? Did you prepare for CLAT all by yourself?

The most important source for me was the judgments. I made a list of the important judgments since the last CLAT LLM exam, which was a long list due to CLAT LLM being postponed because of the pandemic.

My second source was online legal news platforms. They helped not only in identifying the important judgments but also in having a brief idea regarding the judgments I planned to read which gave me a context before I started reading.

My third source was a mock paper series I subscribed to online, which I regularly solved and followed up through analyzing my answers and performance. Though I did not take coaching for

CLAT, I would not say it was all by myself.

Interestingly, I found a Telegram group of people who were preparing for the same exam and we divided the judgments and shared PDFs with highlights and comments. This helped a lot because it gave me direction on what to focus more on based on insights of other people. It definitely eased up the tedious process of reading all the judgments in detail.

P.S. During my law school, I did join coaching classes for judicial services examinations.

What would you say sets apart your #CLATStory from others?

People say using social media is a wastage of time. But I found my calling through social media. I had started an Instagram channel as a hobby to share my journey of preparing for the judicial services examination. Since I never had a mentor in law school, I wanted to give back from whatever little I had learnt.

I started mentoring and teaching my followers who approached me for guidance. My experience of teaching, mentoring, and guiding people from my tiny social media page and their appreciation helped me realize how passionate I am about working in the field of legal education. That's how I started my journey of teaching in law school.

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

As you might have realized, almost nothing in my journey ended up how I planned. But where I find myself in life now fills me with nothing but gratitude. Having a plan is crucial, but it's equally important to embrace life's opportunities. Have a passion to learn and grow. Grab every opportunity you get for it.

Trust in yourself and take responsibility for your actions. Challenges will inevitably arise, but how you perceive and approach them is what truly counts. It is difficult to get into, and survive a law school, seek support if you need it and help others if you can. While law schools hold great significance, they are not the entirety of life. Always keep the bigger picture in mind. Keep going and be grateful for what life brings you.

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

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