JOURNEY TO LAW SCHOOL

IDIA SCHOLARS TELL THEIR STORIES

2020
From the freedom fighters that fought for our nation, to the feminists who fought for universal franchise, some of our greatest leaders have exploited a rare set of tools to fight for a better world. These tools lie in the knowledge of the law. Like our forefathers and foremothers, future generations too will be sure to use the armour of legal education to pave the path to creating more equitable societies. Increasing Diversity by Increasing Access (IDIA) is a student driven movement to make these tools accessible to those who need them to fight the scourge of marginalization.

We proudly present to you in this booklet, some of the faces of the movement. Each of our scholars has embarked upon a unique journey which entails empowerment through legal education, and this booklet aims to give the reader a glimpse into some of their journeys.

This compilation showcases some of the young, promising faces behind the struggle to reshape our future through legal education. Please turn the pages to meet the scholars who have embarked upon the exciting journey to step outside of their communities and have joined the leading law schools of the nation with the hope to make a difference. Try as we may, it remains a daunting task to capture the spirit, tenacity, and leadership qualities of these social transformers. We hope that reading about them will inspire you to spark conversations with them and about their endeavours. The accounts that follow are written in the scholars’ own words, and are reproduced here with minimal editing.
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Hello, I am Jai Singh Rathor and I hail from Patna, Bihar. My family comprises of 4 people. My father, mother, my aunt and I. I am the only child and have no siblings. Incredibly, my parents were pressured by many but were adamant about having a single child so they can give the best education to him.

Belonging to a lower-middle-class family and my father being the only breadwinner of the family, life wasn't always easy and we had our fair share of turbulent times. My family income comes from a small grocery shop or as you call in India "Kirana Dukan" which my father runs. My father goes to the store at 7 in the morning and comes back at 11 at night and almost stands for 12 hours daily. His dedication and hard work have been my biggest motivation.
Many of the people who used to come to my father's shop always used to ask him that why is your son not in the shop and helping you and he always used to answer that if he helps me, it would definitely hamper his studies. I am really fortunate to have a family who supported me in the decision of pursuing law.

I chose law because of the complexity and its effects on people's lives. I was always curious about the judgments and why these were taken. I was always intrigued by political debates and was interested in national and international issues. But just wanting to pursue law isn't an option for someone whose annual family's income is lower than the college fees. For this reason, I thought of searching for a scholarship that would be able to help me. After searching the internet, I saw that there were a handful of scholarships for law and many of them were not reliable. When all hope was lost and I was on the brink of quitting law as a career, I stumbled upon IDIA on the internet. It was a ray of hope, I started to read about the IDIA and Shamnad sir’s dream.

After gathering much of the information, I contacted the IDIA Bihar chapter head and my future mentor Vivek sir. He informed me more about IDIA and the process of the scholarship. The first and the foremost was the INAT exam which I gave and fortunately qualified. Thereafter I had an interview which I also cracked and was admitted as an IDIA trainee. After the process was completed, I was under the mentorship of Vivek sir and Ayush sir. They were the
most inspirational guys I have ever met and always used to motivate me for achieving the best. After preparing for a while and getting pretty confident in the mocks, the consortium suddenly changed the pattern. It was a state of panic for all the students but my mentors were determined that we can still achieve our goals and it helped us to overcome all the problems.

But the real problem started when the pandemic hit the country, and the lockdown was imposed. It was a pretty bad hit to my studies and my family’s income but neither my mentors nor IDIA lost hope in us and swooped in to the rescue. IDIA helped us under those stressful times by providing us with basic necessities like recharges and by providing us with many mock papers. The IDIA family even swore to help our families in this pandemic. IDIA was the reason I didn't even flinch from my studies. Finally, the CLAT exam date came and I gave the exam. I was pretty satisfied with my performance. But when the result dropped, it was a magnificent feeling to see that I qualified the exam and I was one of the best students. All my family members were jubilant and wishes started pouring from everywhere. I am really grateful to my mentors and the IDIA family for this achievement and hopefully one day I can also help some students through IDIA.

Now my college life has started but I am really wishing the pandemic gets over and I can enjoy my life on the campus and achieve all the dreams that I have ever dreamt.
MADIPELLY RITHISH
A student at NLU Delhi, he decided to take up law as a career to help people, society and improve governance.

I am from a small village near Jagtial, Telangana. I was born in a small family consisting of my father, my mother and my siblings. I have two siblings - one is elder to me, and the other one is younger to me. My father is a farmer, and my mother helps in farming too.

I am visually impaired by birth. It was very difficult to study in a normal school. I went to many schools, but not even a single school accepted me because of my blindness. After 8 years, my family found a blind school. They enrolled me there, but I could not study there due to the lack of even the basic necessities. Then, I left that school.

After three years, my parents found another school called Devnar School for the Blind which is in Hyderabad. They decided to send me to that school, but I did not want to go there, because it was far away from my home and I was also afraid to live without my parents. It was difficult to study there. Finally, I started studying there with the help of Braille. When I was in 9th standard, I applied for a sadaran card.

The officer told me that I will get the card via post in 40 to 50 days. I
I thought that becoming a lawyer is the best option for me because the lawyers are aware of legal rights of the PWD candidates.

contacted him after two months, and he told me that it is underprocess. I contacted him again after 9 days, and he told me the same thing. When I went to his office, he said that it requires some money. I had no option but to pay the money to the officer, because I had to submit the card for my SSC board examination.

Afterwards, I started thinking about the reason that I gave him the money even though it was my right to get the certificate from the government. After a lot of contemplation, I thought that becoming a lawyer is the best option for me because the lawyers are aware of legal rights of the PWD candidates. So, I decided to study law.

After my tenth standard, I started thinking about the way I could become a lawyer. Could my family afford it? They were already paying a lot of money, since I had joined the Sri Sai Junior College for Visually Impaired for my eleventh and twelfth standards.

When I was in 11th standard, my senior told me about IDIA and the way it helps people from diverse backgrounds in pursuing legal studies. I was very happy to hear that. So, I decided to join IDIA. My senior told me for that I have to clear an exam to join it. One day, the IDIA team visited my college for sensitisation. There, I sat for the exam. After some time, the team told me that I had cleared the exam. My classes started.

I trained with IDIA for two years. I learned many different tricks to
I faced issues while solving problems relating to diagrams, seating arrangements, etc. They helped me in these areas, and I got better at these questions. I learned how to solve different types of problems by different methods with the help of the IDIA team.

The best thing about the training was that whenever I wanted to write mock tests, the team used to help me to write the mock tests. After writing we would analyse and discuss it together. I would ask questions regarding the Constitution, politics, legislature etc. and they would answer my questions very patiently. Apart from this, the team used to motivate me a lot.

Whenever I got less marks in the mock tests, the team leader would call me to motivate me. Using their own experiences, they told me many tips for solving the questions and maintaining a calm composure while writing a paper. However, I faced issues while solving problems relating to diagrams, seating arrangements, etc. They helped me in these areas, and I got better at these questions. In total, it was a good experience to learn the tricks.

I had written CLAT and AILET. On 27 September 2020, I wrote AILET without any fear because I was sure that I won’t get a seat. Hence, I attempted lesser number of questions. During the exam, I had faced one problem. Generally, I get 30 minutes extra to solve the paper, but the exam centre did not know about this, and I had to talk to the authorities. They asked me to wait for a confirmation from the exam department. It took around 30 minutes. I started my
This result not only made me cry for some days, but it also taught me to accept failure. After two days, I got my AILET result and I was selected exam again, but I could not concentrate on the exam because I had lost my flow.

On 29 September 2020, I wrote CLAT. I went to the examination centre with enthusiasm as I thought that it would be easier than the AILET. After I started my exam, I realised that the paper is tougher than AILET. After 20 minutes, I felt horrible. I stopped my exam and asked my scribe about the amount of time that we were left with. She replied that we had 2 hours. I wanted to come out of the centre, but I managed to sit there, and complete my exam. I came out from the centre with tears in my eyes.

I looked at the answer key, and I thought that I won’t get a seat in any NLU. I called my friends, seniors, teachers and IDIA team members. I was asking everyone if I should take a drop year or leave the legal field altogether. However, most of them told me not to leave the legal field.

The results came, and I got selected in the first list to the National Law University Odisha. However, I was not interested to go to NLUO because I was aiming for NALSAR or NUJS. This result not only made me cry for some days, but it also taught me to accept failure.

After two days, I got my AILET result and I was selected to National Law University Delhi. I was very happy, as I never thought I would get a seat in NLU Delhi.
With heart full of aspirations and eyes filled with dreams; I am Pooja Shukla and I hail from Ahmedabad, Gujarat. My father is an employee of a social organization and works part time there. The income fluctuates between INR 6000-8000 per month, with which he has to take care of our family with two daughters: one still in class 1 and miles to go. As my mother is a home maker, the family solely depends on my father's income.

Passionate and determined about my studies from the beginning, I did my schooling from Adani Vidya Mandir which is a CBSE affiliated no cost school specially meant for the students in need from the economically weaker class of society. I scored a CGPA of 10 in class 10 and stood first in my school and secured 94.20% in my class 12 again holding the first position in my school. Along with my studies, I was an active student who participated in extracurricular activities as well as liked managing events and taking up responsibilities of being the school head girl. Apart from this, I was also a part of the MUN society. Dance and music instruments hold a different place in my heart and I had also competed in them. I always wanted to change the society and its irregular norms but I never
I always wanted to change the society and its irregular norms but I never knew how. I just knew what I want to change but I guess I was still searching for the correct way to play my role.

One day, I came to know about IDIA, through the sensitisation session at my school and it made me realise that my desires and urge to make a change will be accomplished with the profession called Law. I then decided to pursue studying law. I came to know about IDIA from my school itself; because of the similar motive of nurturing the students in need; both the institutions got in touch with each other and that was the turning point. Some mentors from the Ahmedabad chapter of IDIA selected me after I cleared the INAT as well as the other processes. I was sent to one of the coaching centers in Ahmedabad for CLAT for the crash course but as luck would have it, 2019 didn’t turn out that great for me. I then took my admission at H.L. College of Commerce, Ahmedabad and thought law was not my cup of tea. But, as it is said, everything has been planned for us in the heaven and my destiny had its own plans. In the lockdown transition, I sat down and actually did the self-introspection and thought to chase my area of interests.

And here it all starts again. In 2020, I opted for CLAT but this time it was very different - the pattern of the paper had totally changed to a comprehensive one. As I was not even preparing for CLAT throughout the whole of 2019, I was all the more tensed about appearing for CLAT 2020. Not giving up and determined to succeed,
Coming along with a bunch of people of different states and varied cultures, getting to know a lot more about the saying, “Unity in Diversity”, understanding it and being an epitome of that I worked hard and burnt the midnight oil to crack CLAT 2020. IDIA trainers helped me a lot I must say, with all the resources and materials for my preparations. Honestly, I am the depressed kid who gets nervous for every big or small test or event. CLAT was one of the biggest tests of all for me, but then this period of anxiety turned out to a very important watershed when my results were out and the first merit list showed my name at one of the finest NLUs. All my efforts paid off when I performed well in CLAT 2020. I was a happy camper when I saw the first merit list and my name in it. It was just like I was dreaming it all once again, like I used to do when I was in my preparatory stage.

With the help of IDIA, I secured my admission at Gujarat National Law University, Gandhinagar. Due to the current pandemic situation of COVID-19 our university works online. I am so excited to go to campus and to attend lectures for real. The online lectures at times get burdensome as we have to stick to a place for long hours to attend all of them on a virtual platform.

I have been to the campus once in 2019 for appearing for CLAT and the campus looked so big and so beautiful. Just like every CAT aspirant dreams of IIMs, even I just dreamt of an NLU, but I never knew that it will come true. Getting in to a NLU won’t make life any easier but what I believe is that this is actually just the beginning. Coming along with a bunch of people of different states and varied
I aspire to become an asset to the society and pride for my family, an inspiration to my younger sibling and to my friends from my school cultures, getting to know a lot more about the saying, “Unity in Diversity”, understanding it and being an epitome of that, I would love to spend my upcoming years at GNLU, Gandhinagar.

Honestly, I don’t know where I would be after 5-10 years from today, but I am pretty sure I would shape myself in the very best way I can. I aspire to become an asset to the society and pride for my family, an inspiration to my younger sibling and to my friends from my school. I wish to contribute towards the development of society through the legal knowledge I would be gaining in the upcoming beautiful journey at GNLU. I am blessed with the best opportunity, travelling on one of the important paths leading towards my better tomorrow, where IDIA is helping me to smoothen my road and in dealing with all the obstacles ahead. I will make sure that all of these combined efforts lead to constructive change and betterment of the future.

‘But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep’

~ Robert Frost
I am Manugonda Soumya, a scholar of IDIA Charitable Trust, who trained with IDIA’s Hyderabad Chapter for cracking the law entrance examinations. After succeeding in the CLAT 2020 examination, I am now studying at National Law University, Jodhpur.

I have completed my schooling in Hyderabad from the same school as my elder sister, who is also visually challenged.

When I was in 11th standard, members of the IDIA Hyderabad team came to Sai Junior College for a sensitization drive. They introduced us to the CLAT examination and encouraged us to pursue legal education and told us about the resulting career opportunities. Their presentation inspired me to take IDIA’s aptitude test, after which I got selected for the interview. Subjects like legal reasoning and logical reasoning interested me a lot. While watching some of the selected trainees backing out of the program, many of them being girls, I did not stop working for the exam because of my motivations.

I come from a financially weak background in Telangana where both my parents are farmers. I have observed and heard about domestic
I believe that being from a village and witnessing the proceedings of numerous revenue cases, I would be able to serve better on the ground.

violence cases along with divorce and property cases in my village and the other villages surrounding mine. After learning about the opportunity that IDIA could provide, I realized that I could learn about my rights to protect myself and the people like me with the help of this education. I am pursuing the B.A. LL.B. course to become a lawyer, but even if I am unable to, I would still have the knowledge of my rights and claims. I also aspire to take the Civil Services Examination and become an I.A.S. Officer. I believe that being from a village and witnessing the proceedings of numerous revenue cases, I would be able to serve better on the ground. Another reason is that given my background, I want to earn enough money to be self-sufficient. I also wish to support my mother who has always prompted me to gain an education.

Throughout my journey as an IDIA trainee, the organization has helped me immensely. When my phone broke, IDIA arranged a new cell phone for me. They also conducted extra classes to cover up the training that I had missed due to my broken phone. The team has also gone to great lengths to ensure that I was able to take my legal entrance exams smoothly. For our assistance during the examinations, I, along with other visually impaired trainees, were provided with scribes. For people like me, people with patience are necessary, and IDIA got me a brilliant scribe who was able to deal patiently with me. The members had meticulously selected the scribes and trained them. We were given the opportunity to practice with our prescribed scribe one month before the actual
I am thankful for the constant support that IDIA has provided me. I am looking forward to the new experiences that college life has in store for me.

The exam, which was very helpful as the scribe and I were able to coordinate better. My scribe, Apoorva, matched my speed, which is an ability a scribe needs to possess. All of the aspirants had to face many obstacles this year, which included the change in the pattern of the CLAT exam and the pandemic. The new pattern is not favorable for persons with disabilities. The time allotted to us did not justify the lengthy structure that CLAT had adopted for the exam. Without the dedication of the IDIA members and trainers, it would have been impossible for me to make the progress and achieve the result I eventually did. Though I wanted to study in NALSAR, Hyderabad and stay close to home, I could not contain my happiness when I was informed that I had made it to one of the top five national law universities. I am thankful for the constant support that IDIA has provided me.

Starting my higher education in a university that is not a special needs school was slightly intimidating. Pandemic and distance learning did not make it any easier. However, members of the IDIA Rajasthan Chapter have been helping me navigate from the beginning of the session, academically or otherwise. I have faith that living on campus would resolve many of the problems I am facing. In the four years that I would be on campus, I expect to interact with more people and learn various things from my peers and teachers. I am looking forward to the new experiences and the exposure that college life has in store for me.
My name is Udai Maurya. I am an IDIA Scholar who was trained by the IDIA Delhi Chapter; and a first-year student at Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University, Lucknow (RMLNLU).

I was born in the Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh, which is near the Indo-Nepal border. I belong to a very simple family. My father is a farmer, and my mother is a homemaker. To provide me with a good quality of education, my father did different kinds of odd jobs.

From a very young age, I have been interested in contributing to the society that has brought me up. Since I come from a rural background, I have seen and experienced several atrocities that the poor and vulnerable people have to face on a daily basis. I am motivated to provide socially and economically deprived people with legal aid, and to advance their knowledge about human rights, and the remedies available upon their violation.

I have been enthusiastic about taking up responsibility of many leadership positions throughout my academic journey. After
I wanted to become an agent of change in the society, and it becomes easier to bring a change when you are well aware of the laws. Still, there were some hurdles between me and my dream such as the scarcity of resources. Completing my class 12th, I took admission into the BA programme in Law and Politics at the Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD). There, I was elected as a Student-Faculty Coordinator. The work profile entailed multiple academic and social responsibilities. I would like to mention some of them. I took the initiative to start bilingual classes in a purely English-medium university, with the aim to further linguistic and social inclusion of those who were not comfortable with English. In pursuance of the same objective, I increased the ambit of the 'Language Cell' program of the AUD with the help of the authorities concerned. Furthermore, I created a mechanism wherein study materials were made available to all those who were not in a financial position to access the required academic resources. I was also awarded a merit scholarship in my first semester by AUD.

I loved the way our professors inspired us in the classroom and outside with their understanding of societal issues. Many of these professors like, Prof. Lawrence Liang and Dr. Anuj Bhuwania, who influenced me at AUD, came from the National Law School of India University, Bangalore. I started seeing legal education as a very empowering area of study. When I discussed my interest with my professors, I got to know about CLAT/AILET from them. The main reason for me in choosing law as my career option was that I wanted to become an agent of change in the society, and it becomes easier to bring a change when you are well aware of the laws. Still, there were some hurdles between me and my dream such as the scarcity of resources, the inability to afford studying in the National Law
Universities (NLUs) and the requirements for the preparation for the law entrance examinations.

After researching a bit, I got to know about IDIA through one of my friends. I took IDIA National Aptitude Test and was selected as an IDIA Trainee of its Delhi Chapter. I started preparing for the CLAT/AILET and left the college in the middle of my second semester.

IDIA had arranged an accommodation facility for me that was very near to National Law University Delhi (NLU-D). The whole IDIA team was very supportive. IDIA had appointed several amazing students of NLU-D as my mentors, and teachers. Many of them are like my elder brothers and sisters now. I got enrolled in the nearest center of Career Launcher for my CLAT preparation. The study materials and the mock tests that I got from the coaching center were very helpful. My mentor was the best person that I had ever met. She always tried her best to help land me into the best National Law University. I don’t think I can describe the quality of people I met, and the skills, like speaking, writing, and reading, that I had developed during my training by the IDIA, in just a few words. It was my greatest experience ever.

Unfortunately, the year 2020 was, as we all know, the worst year that we could have ever dreamt of. Vladimir Lenin’s adage rightly fits the year - “There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen”. I had to come back to my village
IDIA enabled me to fly and reach my full potential, and I am more than thankful to IDIA for providing me this opportunity.

when the Government of India had imposed a lockdown due to COVID-19. My preparation started getting hampered because there wasn’t a good internet connection available. Electricity cuts were also one of the major issues. I kept waiting for the relaxation of the lockdown. But, when I thought that it is not going to end soon, I sought help from IDIA and moved to the nearest city for my preparation. IDIA had also arranged a laptop to help me with my preparation. IDIA helped me the best that they could.

My CLAT test center was in a town in Lucknow. I reached there just five minutes before the commencement of the exam. The COVID was at its peak during those days, and I had caught a mild fever. However, the best thing was that I was able to give the examination to the best of my ability.

The result wasn’t as I had expected. The final result declared by the Consortium of National Law Universities was approximately 15 marks lesser than I had calculated as my score based on the answer keys that were released. It might have happened due to technical glitches. We had filed a complaint about the same but it was to no avail.

I did the best that I could, and finally, got the admission to RMLNLU. I can say from the bottom of my heart is that had IDIA not been there, I probably wouldn’t have reached here. IDIA enabled me to fly and reach my full potential, and I am more than thankful
to IDIA for providing me this opportunity of doing something for the humankind.

My expectations from the RMLNLU and the campus life are that they will prepare me for facing the upcoming challenges in the world. I will be able to develop the skills that are needed to bring much needed changes into society. I expect that by the time I graduate from college, I will be a critical thinker, a creative writer, and an influential speaker, which are some of the skills that are most required in the 21st century.
Before I start talking about my journey, from a small town in Bihar to India’s best law college, I would like to introduce myself. My name is Yashwant Kumar and I am from Masaurhi. Masaurhi is a small town that is located approximately 30 kilometres from Patna. My family consists of 5 members - my father, my mother, my two siblings and I. I am the middle child. My elder brother has joined our family business and my younger brother is currently studying in class 9th. I belong to a lower-middle-class family with my father as the only breadwinner of the family.

I got 91.8% marks in the 10th standard board examinations and it was the turning point for my career. Neither I nor my family expected such a result. My relatives suggested to my father that I am very talented in studies and he should send me to Patna for further studies.

I am fortunate that I was never forced to choose a particular career, and everything regarding it was decided by me. I decided to choose law as my career and to become a judge one day. It was not a sudden decision. I was clear about my aim since I was in class 9th. Political
I am thankful to the IDIA team, which continuously supported me, especially in the pandemic when I got disconnected from everything. Debates and discussions fascinated me. I used to wonder about the powers of a judge and the extent to which they can serve society. These considerations made me firm in my decision. However, the path was not that easy. When I checked about the best law colleges in the country, I found out that the fees levied by the colleges (except for a few colleges like GLC Mumbai and ILS Pune) are too high for my family to afford. Taking a loan was not an easy option considering the financial background of my family. I kept checking all the possible ways for getting scholarships to go to law colleges. Then, I came across the IDIA Bihar Chapter on Facebook. I gathered all the information about IDIA and found out that it is an NGO working for underprivileged students who want to pursue law in India’s top law colleges.

I met Vivek Mishra (lovingly, I call him ‘Vivek sir’) in Patna. He told me that I need to give the INAT exam and based upon the marks that I will receive in that exam, I will be called for an interview. I knew little about law at that time, but I sat for the exam and, fortunately, I was selected for an interview. After all the procedures, I was selected as a trainee under IDIA and finally, my training began at Legalight in Patna under the mentorship of Vivek Sir and Ayush Sir.

Expectations were high from me and I was aware of my goal. For two years, I used to travel 30 kilometers from my home to Patna, and do the training while parallelly attending my school. I am thankful to the IDIA team, which continuously supported me, especially in the
I hope to develop the characteristics of a good judge. I expect that the campus life will be a roller-coaster ride for 5 years with all the elements of fun and learning.

pandemic when I got disconnected from everything. Many problems arose in between like the syllabus was changed, the lockdown was announced and the CLAT exam was postponed four times. These together were enough to break any student's courage but with constant support from my family and the IDIA team, I continued undaunted. IDIA used to provide me with various educational resources for studying from home along with mobile recharge and other things. I used to think that if everyone is doing so much for me, then it's my moral duty to fulfil their expectations.

Finally, the day of CLAT came and I gave the exam with calmness. I was sure of a good result after the exam but never expected that I will be among the top 50 students of this country. I can’t describe my feelings at the moment I checked my results. My family was there and everyone lifted me in a feeling of joy! Wishes started to pour in and I was unable to sleep that night thinking about all my past struggles and all the helpful hands that were responsible for my result including my family, my mentors, and the IDIA team. I was selected for National Law School of India University. Honestly speaking, I used to dream about NLSIU but the actual feeling of getting admission there was a dream come true. The only thing that I am missing currently is the campus!

I hope this college will give me an environment that will help me
develop the characteristics required for a good judge. That is my aim and my dream. NLSIU has everything that a law student wants. I expect that the campus life will be a roller-coaster ride for 5 years with all the elements of fun and learning.
My name is Ishika Thakur. I am from Khargone, a small city situated in Madhya Pradesh. I have completed my 10th standard from Maharishi Vidya Mandir, Khargone and secured a CGPA of 9.2. Then, I got into Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalay, Bhopal to pursue hotel management for my 11th and 12th standard. After one year, I realized that I don’t want to do hotel management and started looking for other options. That’s when some of my teachers recommended to me to pursue law. I started reading about it and I liked it but I knew nothing about it till then.

My family consists of four members - my mother, my brother, my sister and me. My father passed away in 2009 due to cardiac arrest. He owned a restaurant and after he passed away, we gave it on rent and that’s where we get our livelihood from. I am from a middle-class family with an income of Rs. 30,000 per month.

I never thought of pursuing legal education until my teachers told me but I always had an emotional connection to it because my father was an aspiring law graduate (he left it in between, during the 3rd year of LLB due to financial problems). Legal education empowers
The thing I like about law is that it hears people, solves their problems and is the same for everyone. It does not change for the rich or the poor.

How I came to know about IDIA is what I call luck. Just when I was reading about law, an IDIA team (Madhya Pradesh chapter) came to my school to select trainees. They took a test comprising of 37 questions. I cleared the test and went for the interview and got selected. I gave CLAT 2019 and didn’t get selected so I took a drop year and IDIA helped me throughout my journey. Even during the lockdown period, they got us enrolled in online classes and test series. Leaders or trainers were always available whenever you need them. Before lockdown, they used to conduct mock tests for us and also gave us reading material. After the pandemic began, we were having quizzes and online classes regularly so that we don’t lose track. My experience as an IDIA trainee was very good. My trainers were kind, humble and always ready to help.

When I started studying for my drop year, I concentrated and used to study a lot. I was getting good marks in the mock exams. My rank in coaching was improving. But then the consortium of NLUs changed the pattern and also did not give us any module or clarifications regarding how questions are going to be in the exam. When they gave us the sample paper, it was not what we used to study. I felt low because my reading speed was not good but I started...
I am loving my experience here so far. I have many expectations from the campus, & once the offline classes will start, I think I can show my real potential.

working on it. I used to read every day. I started reading newspapers for the first time in my life but my marks in mocks were low. When marks started improving, the pandemic took over and the lockdown made us concentrate more on corona virus numbers rather than mock scores. My preparations were not going well and CLAT was postponed and again procrastination took over. There were rumours that CLAT will be cancelled. When case numbers came down and things started re-opening some national level exams were conducted but CLAT again got postponed to another date. After that, it finally happened.

It was not an easy paper, not even a moderate one. It was tough for me because I had a habit of doing the General Knowledge section first and that was the most difficult section of the paper. I got nervous plus it was a very lengthy paper. Afterwards I got to know that it was actually a difficult paper, I felt relaxed. I was not expecting much from the results but at least a decent national law university alas I did not get it. I was heartbroken and I thought now nothing can be done but then my trainers told me that they will fill my form for Institute of Law, Nirma University (ILNU). I was being so pessimistic that I thought I won’t be getting even ILNU. I got it and it is a great college. I am loving my experience here so far.

I have many expectations from the campus as our batch has not yet been to campus due to the pandemic. Till now, it is going good. I hope that offline classes start soon.
People who used to know me from a very young age tell me today that they always knew that I would be choosing a legal career or something similar to that. I was known in school as “the boy with the complicated name”. ‘Mohammed Dhulqr Shan’ was hard to read and pronounce until a Malayalee actor with a similar name became famous. In school, I started to perform various activities on stage from primary classes onwards. This must have made an impression on others about me as a confident public speaker.

But until I was in class 12, I wasn’t sure about choosing any specific field for my higher studies. All I had was a keen curiosity for the legal field, induced by watching TV series like ‘Suits’ and ‘Billions’, and a rather huge aversion to most sought out area like medicine and engineering. It was at this time that I happened to find an old legal document from my father’s old belongings. This was regarding an injunction application with my father as a respondent. This brought back the memories of the time this case was going on. I remembered it very well because it was a difficult time for my family financially and emotionally, and this made it
But I was able to convince my family about these skewed conceptions and they supported my decision and they always gave much importance to education, even to my sisters’, at a time when higher education was not a prevalent option for girls from my community.

Then, I decided to give CLAT a try in the year 2019 with just the preparation of my own. When I failed to obtain a seat at an NLU, I decided to take a drop year and reattempt CLAT.

Since my father suffered a stroke two years ago as of then, my family was going through trying times financially and we raised the concern to the head teacher of “Heritage Institution” where I decided to go for CLAT coaching. It was through her that I came to know about IDIA and its scholarship schemes. I have heard many people telling me about the year they wasted repeating for an entrance exam. But it was not the case for me! Far from seeing it as a wasted year, I am thankful that I had the opportunity to study there. Apart from the good friends I made over there, it made me think on a lot of levels - spiritual, political, social like never before. I had the only worse. Reading this document had a deep impact on me and the interest to study law increased to a great extent. Coming from a rather orthodox community, everyone was not so happy when I finally decided to pursue legal education. A lot of people warned me about the profession that forces you to “lie!” and that would be against my religion’s ideals. But I was able to convince my family about these skewed conceptions and they supported my decision and they always gave much importance to education, even to my sisters’, at a time when higher education was not a prevalent option for girls from my community.
I am looking forward to all those productive debates, moot courts and spending time in the library and to get the feel of the city Kochi again.

opportunity to mingle with some of the best peer groups, and it was from there, I came to realize that I have been ignorant about a lot of things in my life and about the opportunities the legal profession opened for me. It was there I knew for sure that I wanted to be a lawyer.

The preparation became so tiring once we were forced to go home due to the pandemic and also due to the multiple postponements of exams. Only Kerala Law Entrance Exam was conducted close to the initial date. Writing all these exams under the COVID-19 protocols was extremely irritating. CLAT and AILET were extremely difficult papers and I was so disheartened after leaving the exam hall by my performance. I was almost sure about not getting into a National Law University. But there were types of questions that I expected only because of some last-minute mock tests I attempted a few days earlier given by IDIA.

The reactions towards the exam results were mixed. The Kerala law exam’s result came even before CLAT was conducted. I was so amazed and happy about achieving the 25th rank. That was one of the best results I have ever achieved in life. I was so nervous about the CLAT result and once it was out, I was so relieved. Even though I couldn’t achieve what I aimed for in the first place, I did get a better rank than I anticipated right after the exam.
I was very excited about taking admission in NUALS. I have an amazing peer group and am finally learning something I love. I am still excited about going to the university in person and trying to experience the college life I always dreamed about. I am looking forward to all those productive debates, moot courts and spending time in the library, to be a part of sports team and to get the feel of the city Kochi again.
WHATEVER IT TAKES

NAVEEN PRINCE
A student at the National University of Advanced Legal Studies, Kochi wants to help people who don’t have the money by providing legal aid.

My name is Naveen Prince. I am from a small village in Kerala, named Teekoy. I did my schooling at St. Mary’s Higher Secondary School, Teekoy. I got a full A+ in both SSLC and in the 12th standard. My father was an autorickshaw driver. My family had a happy life, with the earnings of my father. I have two younger siblings. My sister studies in plus one and my brother is in the eighth standard. A few years back, my father developed back pain. After a diagnosis, the doctor said that he had a slip disk. So, he went through an operation at the end of December 2018 but, he has huge pain even after the operation. So, my mother started to work as an attendant at a petrol pump. She is the sole bread-winner of my family. Now, my father has started to walk without the support of the stick. I did catering and decoration jobs while I was in 12th standard. I also participated in the science fair for the Malayalam Typing competition and reached up till the district level.

From the fourth standard, my father used to talk about the profession of advocates. I also saw a lot of Malayalam movies related
I then called IDIA from the number from the newspaper cutting. I did not know how to speak English at that time. So, a Malayali IDIA member called me and told me to come to NUALS for the INAT exam. I think Sarath Chetai had called me. I passed the INAT exam.

As per the directions of Sarath Chetai, I also went to Heritage Coaching Class. They also had an entrance exam to get into the ‘Heritage’ coaching centre. I passed that exam also and started to study in Heritage.

My first class at Heritage was difficult. Mariyam ma’am took an introduction class and it was all in English. I was enrolled in the English medium branch of my school, but our English teacher taught English in Malayalam. I spoke to Mariyam ma’am (Head of Heritage) about it and she said that it will become okay after a month. After a month I started to understand the classes. But my...
From 11th March 2020, a nationwide lockdown started. During that time, IDIA members gave me a class on each subject. The IDIA centre also offered Manu Law Classes. Marks were not increasing. I lived in a hostel named YMCA at Palarivattam area in Ernakulam. Four other Heritage students were also with me. 2 of them were my roommates and both of them didn’t study anything yet always got more marks than me. I used to talk to Sarath Chetai who encouraged me all the time. Then, the IDIA Kerala Chapter started to take extra classes during the weekends for me at the NUALS campus. I learnt a lot from all the mentors there. I also started talking in English with them. Soon after two or three months, a notification from the CLAT consortium came out that the CLAT pattern has changed. The new pattern mainly focused on the ability of understanding. The new pattern was very difficult and I scored very low marks in the mocks. I got depressed. Dharshini Chechi was my mentor. She gave me the courage to do well. I tried my best.

From 11th March 2020, a nationwide lockdown started. During that time, IDIA members gave me a class on each subject. The IDIA centre also offered Manu Law Classes. It was like a revision for me. CLAT 2020 got postponed thrice. I started to doubt whether CLAT would be conducted at all. On 26th September 2020, the AILET examination was conducted. Because of lockdown, I had difficulty in transportation. IDIA offered a taxi fare. Because of that, I smoothly took the examination. But I didn’t do well in the exam. I took a long time in maths section. On 28th September 2020, the CLAT was conducted. The questions were very tough. I got to the
I want to become a nice lawyer. I want to help a lot of people who don't have the money. I want to work at IDIA like Shinto Chetai.

Conclusion that in most questions I knew one of these two is the answers. But I marked the wrong one. Literally, I lost the war. I scored 31.50 marks and an all India rank of 24745. I secured admission to Government Law College, Ernakulam and started studying law there. After three weeks, IDIA Director Shinto Mathew Abraham Chetai told me to apply at NUALS under the EWS reservation. I did all of this as per the directions of Shinto Chetai. NUALS then put out the list of candidates who are eligible according to the EWS category. I was the 8th ranked person on the list and they offered the first six students a seat. If two students don’t accept the offer, then I had a chance. After two more weeks, NUALS offered the seventh and eighth-ranked candidates’ admission. It was a miracle. A person ranked with 24745 got admission in one of the top National Law Universities. IDIA paid the entire fee. That’s how I started with NUALS.

I don’t know any more about campus. Shinto Chetai told me that in these five years I will have to enjoy and do more extracurricular activities. I want to become a nice lawyer. I want to help a lot of people who don’t have the money by providing legal aid. I want to work at IDIA like Shinto Chetai. I want to become a great personality like Shamnad Basheer.
Hi. My name is Shani A R. I was born and raised in Trivandrum, the capital city of Kerala. My father is an auto-driver and my mother is a housewife. I have a sister, who is two years older than me, pursuing a master’s degree in Kerala University. I have been blessed with very loving and caring grandparents. They run a small shop, where I often go to lend a hand.

When I was two years old, we lost everything we had as a result of a family breakdown and the rollercoaster ride started there! My father worked hard to buy a piece of land and it took years to complete the construction work of our home. We had to take loans for various needs and have been struggling to repay the same.

Due to financial problems, my parents were not able to complete their education. This motivated me to study hard and I managed to top my class every year. In the 10th standard, I achieved what I aimed for, and I opted for the commerce stream. Usually, science students top in our school. My teachers had confidence that I could change this trend and with their help I became my school topper that year.
I used to have a bad picture of law in my mind, but IDIA showed me the positive sides of it. This changed my perception and attracted me to the legal field.

While I was in twelfth standard, the IDIA Kerala chapter organized a sensitization program in my school through which I came to know about NLUs and CLAT. They also explained the various career opportunities available after law school. Initially I thought law wasn’t my cup of tea, but one of my teachers told me to give it a try. I appeared for the preliminary test and got selected from my school. I used to have a bad picture of law in my mind, but IDIA showed me the positive sides of it. This changed my perception and attracted me to the legal field.

I devoted one year to CLAT preparation. IDIA allotted mentors, who were ever-ready to help me. They conducted mock tests every week and took classes every day. In the beginning, it was very difficult for me. I was completely shocked when I realized that I had forgotten the basics of maths, a subject I was good at in school. I had lost touch with the basics of maths as I opted for the commerce stream after tenth standard where computer application was the only option I had in my school. I became increasingly embarrassed and flustered over this, but my mentors gave me mental support. They spent their valuable time on me. This past year Covid-19 presented a sea of challenges to all and the CLAT got postponed several times. Nevertheless, IDIA volunteers and mentors were there to help. They took classes without fail and provided many mock tests, which helped me a lot.
I would like to thank all my mentors and well-wishers who have put in selfless effort for me....
To be frank, I would not be even close to where I am today without IDIA’s assistance.
Thank you, IDIA family!

In life, sometimes things do not go the way we think they would. On the big day I was nervous as usual, but to top that my system got stuck during the exam. I panicked and lost valuable time. I had to skip a certain number of questions. I never thought this would happen to me and I felt hopeless. I thought all my effort had gone in vain. I did expect an unsatisfactory result, but I miserably failed to muster the courage to face the same. Dharshini, one of my mentors, called me and I cried like a baby over the phone. I could barely speak for a while and she tried to console me. With time, I managed to come to terms with my result. However, by the grace of God, I got into NUALS in the second allotment list.

I would like to thank all my mentors and well-wishers who have put in selfless effort for me. I would especially like to thank Shinto and Dharshini for their constant support and guidance. To be frank, I would not be even close to where I am today without IDIA’s assistance. Thank you, IDIA family!
Every change demands courage, obsession, persistence and faith. It requires us to strive every day to be better and I, at IDIA, haven’t just changed, but have rather transformed. My name is Mohammad Atik Saiyed, and I am an aspiring law student, with a hungry mind and a thankful heart, all set to flap my wings and fly towards the huge sky of hope.

I did my schooling at Adani Vidya Mandir in Ahmedabad (AVM), a school for economically underprivileged students. Exploring & unwrapping myself, pursuing law as a career was always a dream, albeit, a dark dream without any direction. My father is a plumber in Ahmedabad, earning a small income on daily wage basis, to support the family of five. My mother is a good homemaker. I have two siblings. My father has always been an inspiration to me and we live a satisfactory life with an average standard of living. We live in Juhapura, which is on the outskirts of Ahmedabad. With this life, I had tiny dreams. I am very passionate about meeting new people, exploring perceptions, exchanging thoughts, and expressing believes. I like to write things and express myself. I am good at expressing myself and public speaking. I am fond of sports such as cricket, football and athletics.
For our family, it was always difficult to balance life. Our family has five members and managing the education of three kids at the same time was challenging in those tough times. I studied in a government school in our locality till my 3rd standard and after that I appeared for an entrance exam for the Adani Vidya Mandir School. I accomplished my primary education in a Gujarati medium school and the English language was always out of my reach. Getting admission to AVM unveiled new opportunities and challenges that taught me a lot. I was in the minority section of the school, and learning new culture, habits, language and ways of living was challenging.

Fortune took a miraculous turn, when I was introduced to IDIA in a program conducted by IDIA volunteers in our school. I was an average student. I appeared for the exam and the interviews. Surprisingly, IDIA unveiled my potential and capabilities after selecting me as a trainee. IDIA team members from the Nirma Chapter explained to us the vision and mission of IDIA and procedure of selection at IDIA. When I got selected, IDIA changed my dream to our collective goal, and diligently, we started moving forward. Effortlessly, without getting tired, I was trained by some of the most dedicated and caring mentors. Mentors at the IDIA Nirma chapter– along with their responsibility, had showered on us a lot of hard work, kindness, motivation, teachings, skills, and support in every aspect. I was like a firefly and my mentors were the flame that ignited the spark in me to believe in possibilities. I attempted CLAT.
All I can offer is thankfulness and gratitude to IDIA, for gifting this life that I aspired to live and grow with, everyday!

We all were pumped with enthusiasm and were eagerly waiting for the CLAT results. When the day of the results finally arrived, my parents, mentors, colleagues, friends and foremost, I were waiting. Everyone was connected with me throughout the day of the result. My mind was being flooded with a lot of negative thoughts. I was constantly asking myself the all-pervasive question - “What if I didn’t make it?” I had a talk with my mentors and they guided me to keep calm and to have belief in myself and the best will happen. The result and rankings were finally out and proudly, as well as, surprisingly, I secured an All India Rank of 816 in the Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) and rank 39 in the Gujarat domicile category. Fortunately, the hard work and dedication of the IDIA team paid off, as I earned my admission to one of the most prestigious law schools of the nation – Gujarat National Law University (GNLU). I had lesser trust on my abilities, and more belief in the persistence and diligent efforts put in by the IDIA team. All the happy messages, wishes and blessings after the declaration of the result were among the biggest rewards for me from the IDIA team. One of the proudest moments of my life was when my mentors appraised my parents of my achievement and I still cherish the smile on my parents’ faces. Merrily and joyfully, we
It was an honour for me to conduct the session at the same school from where I studied and share my beautiful journey to the law school that was made possible with IDIA.

I was introduced to my new life in a law college by the team of IDIA Gujarat Chapter at GNLU, and they assisted in my academics, assignment submissions as well as in every social, emotional, and psychological aspect of my law school life. 2020 was notably a tough year for me because of the new culture and the era of evolving technology. For me, it was initially difficult to cope up with the advancements and needs. IDIA stood by my side, and supported me throughout. It provided me with a laptop and other necessary equipment so that I can smoothly sail on to my dreams. IDIA, for me, is a god which has showered me with such blessings and opportunities to excel in and cherish in my life. I feel indebted forever, and will try to the best of my abilities to give back and make a better society with the similar vision. I aspire to be one of the finest lawyers of the nation, and serve the society in the best way I can. I look forward to journey filled with new experiences at the law school.
DREAM IT, BELIEVE IT, BUILD IT

My name is Mala Abhishek. I come from Koriviched, a village in Telangana. I have three siblings - an elder brother and 2 younger sisters. My father passed away in 2007, and from then on, I was raised by my mother, a daily wage worker. My brother is also a daily wage worker. My sisters are studying in a government junior college.

At the age of 14, I was told that I needed a disability certificate, to prove that I was visually impaired. On asking around about this, I was told that I had to go to the local government hospital to collect my certificate, and that it was free of any charges. To my surprise, as I visited there, the middleman asked me for Rs. 1500 as a fee for my certificate. I had no option but to pay up. Later, when I expressed my frustration to my teacher at school, she said that the only way to change the system, is by getting a good education and changing the system from the inside. Which is why I decided to become an IAS officer, and thought a BA LLB background would be beneficial in the future. This will help me break down and analyze problems, in order to come to sensible solutions. I also feel that as I am from a poor family, a legal education will help me secure my future, and in turn
While preparing for my exams, I was alone in the hostel in Hyderabad, as I needed to stay there because I didn’t have internet in my house. This was a depressing period.

I did my 11th and 12th grade studies from Sai Junior College, a school for the visually challenged in Hyderabad. Students from NALSAR came to our institute. They explained what IDIA does, and how legal education opens the doors to various opportunities later in life. I got through the selection process, which consisted of an exam and an interview, both of which I passed. Then the training started, which went on for two years alongside my 11th and 12th grade studies.

My overall experience with IDIA has been excellent. They have done a great service to me. They have taught me for 2 years, without charging anything. If not for my mentors, who were NALSAR students, I would not have been able to pass the entrance exams. They were open to be reached out to. The journey with them so far has been great. IDIA volunteers are benevolent and magnanimous people, and I’m eternally grateful to them.

Writing and preparing for the law exams would have been extremely difficult, if I did not have the excellent guidance of my IDIA mentors. There were a lot of delays in the examination schedule of this year, due to the fact that we’re currently living through a pandemic. These delays led to me losing my interest in preparation. While preparing for my exams, I was alone in the hostel in Hyderabad, as I needed to stay there because I didn’t have internet in my house. This was a depressing period. 

also improve my family’s quality of life. I want to get into social service, and feel like my legal background will be an advantage in the field.
I hope that people treat me with kindness, and welcome me with love and affection. I hope that they don’t have any bias against me, and will be willing to help me.

There wasn’t any proper food, or facilities, and this reduced my concentration even further. With my will power, I believed that I should concentrate all my energies on my preparation. The material and classes provided by IDIA for English, Legal, General Knowledge and Logical Reasoning, helped me regain my focus. My mentor was open to clarifying any doubts I had. I cracked AILET mainly because of this help.

CLAT, was the first result I received. This was quite disappointing, and this led to me feeling quite depressed. I was insulted by a lot of people for my poor result. After that, was the result of AILET. I’d done really well, and the same people who had insulted me, called me, apologized and acknowledged my achievement. I was surprised by my result in the AILET, and this gave me back the confidence that I had lost due to my poor CLAT result.

On campus, I hope that people treat me with kindness, and welcome me with love and affection. I hope that they don’t have any bias against me, and will be willing to help me. The idea of living in an entirely new city is very exciting. The exposure to some of the greatest minds in our country, is something I am looking forward to. I will have the opportunity to learn many new things from a lot of new interesting people, and this is something I can’t wait to experience. I’ve been living in hostels for the past 8 years, and there, the rules were extremely strict and we didn’t really have any freedom. I feel like I would have more freedom on campus, and this freedom is something I’m excited for.