Career in Law

 **Introduction .. Hamid Khan**

**Ambrose Bierce in his Devil’s dictionary describes a lawyer as someone who is skilled in the ‘circumvention of the law’. The notion of a lawyer who is adept at finding ‘loopholes’ in the system is a popular one in our country too but we cannot deny that to one up the law one must know the law. From writers to politicians to freedom fighters, lawyers have donned many hats. Mahatma Gandhi, Dr Rajendra Prasad, Franz Kafka and Abraham Lincoln – all these were lawyers.**

**Law is one of the popular career choices in our country for a long time. Those whose families have been into the profession for generations in India usually opt to study law too. However, to become a lawyer it is not mandatory to have a family background in law neither is it necessary that you belong to an affluent family. Anyone can choose to study law as long as one has the passion for it.**

**Traditionally, students could specialise in either civil or criminal laws. However, this concept has changed and now students can opt to specialise in any of the various options offered like patent laws, corporate laws, etc. A degree in law not only lets you practice as a lawyer in the courts in the company but also opens up career options in sectors like corporate management, legal services and administrative services.**

**Step-by-Step**

**Students interested in making a career in law can either do a three-year law course after graduation in any discipline or a 5 years’ course after 12th class. In fact, the 3 years’ course is now giving way to the 5 years’ one which is seen as a better option. In most cases, colleges run the 3 years’ course only for those whose main discipline in graduation is something other than law, or working professionals who want to do an LLB as an additional qualification. The five year course is meant for those who want to take up law as a career – be it as a litigator, or any other kind of legal professional.**

**The LLB course is regulated by the Bar Council of India which sets rules and regulations regarding legal practice in the country. Any specialisation is done at masters, MPhil or PhD stage. A higher degree helps candidates get jobs in academics.**

**Start Early**

**A candidate can start preparing for law entrance exam conducted at national level for 5 years’ BA LLB at various National Law Schools soon after completing the senior secondary exam. The national law entrance exam, CLAT (Combined Law Admission Test) basically tests the student’s general english, legal aptitude, general awareness, logical skills, etc.**

**Some universities which offer the three years’ LLB conduct entrance exam which have a syllabus on the same lines.**

**Is It the Right Career for Me?**

**Law is a career which requires loads of patience and logical skills. It takes loads of hard work and dedication to become a successful lawyer. First generation lawyers particularly face numerous problems in their profession as is true of every other profession. It becomes easier if one trains under a Senior Counsel in the beginning of their career. This is not to say that newbies cannot make it own their own. Anything is possible with determination and of course, hard work. Great communication skills and a faculty for critical analysis and articulation are pre-requisites for lawyers. Therefore, one should analyze these points before opting for law as a career.**

**What would it Cost Me?**

**Three years’ LLB course usually involves lesser expenses in the range of Rs 20,000 to Rs 30,000 for three years. The 5 years’ BA LLB comparatively costsa little more in the lieu of about Rs 3,00,000 for five years. Hostel expenses are exclusive of the tuition fees.**

**Funding and Scholarship**

**Not many law schools offer financial help on the basis of entrance exam. The student must talk to the authorities and find out the specific policies on scholarship from respective universities. Students can also opt to take a bank loan or apply for various scholarships that are offered from time to time.**

**Job Prospects**

**There are a plethora of opportunities for a law graduate. One can either practice as an advocate in a court of law or work with corporate firms. By clearing exams conducted by Public Service Commissions, a law graduate can become a judge. After gaining experience, a law graduate can hope to become Solicitor General, a Public Prosecutor or offer services to government departments and ministries. One can also work as a legal adviser for various organisations. Teaching in colleges, working with NGOs and working as a reporter for newspapers and television channels are other attractive options.**

**Pay Packet**

**Whereas a lawyer who wishes to start practicing in a court can get a stipend of Rs 5000 to Rs 40,000 depending upon the advocate he is associated with, a law graduate working with Legal Process Outsourcing receives can earn attractive salary in the range of Rs 20,000 and Rs 50,000. It is a very high paying profession, but dfepends largely on the calibre, popularity and success of the candidate. The college you graduate from is another factor.**

**Demand and Supply**

**An acute shortage of qualified lawyers has been a major problem in India. The Bar Council of India has often expressed its concern that young lawyers do not join the Bar. There are nearly ten lakh lawyers in India but according to law experts only 20 per cent of them can be considered fit enough to practice law in courts. Several law schools like NLSU, NALSAR were established to increase the level of legal education and produce skilled lawyers to meet the requirement.**

**However, India is a country with one of the highest litigation rates among its population and Sir Ivor Jennings termed the Indian Constitution “a lawyer’s paradise.” Talented lawyers will never have to worry about their income.**

**Market Watch**

**Talks are on to expand the scope for legal practice in India and open the gates for law firms from outside India. Law graduates can expect better job opportunities when foreign law firms start their operations in India. LPOs have started to recruit young law graduates for their processes dealing in US laws or UK laws. Legal education has been liberalised and for that reason professionals from various other disciplines too are interested to do short term courses in law which ultimately will help to raise the standard of legal awareness.**

**International Focus**

**Legal education in India is similar to the one in Britain. Whereas several universities in UK offer legal education to Indian students, Indian students quite enjoy working in the UK wherein they receive attractive salary packages. A recent trend has been that students from India study in law colleges in the USA and receive attractive jobs after completion of the course. Harvard Law School, Yale University, Australia National University, etc. are some attractive options for Indian law students these days.**

**Positives/Negatives**

**Lawyers like other professionals such as doctors and chartered accountants require experience to polish their skills and become valuable for their clients. Therefore, it is time which helps a lawyer become effective. Candidates determined to succeed in the profession have to be patient in the initial phase of their career. However, there is no limit to success and money as well as power for a lawyer. Lawyers are not only respected but also help people in their battle for justice.**

**Different Roles, Different Names**

**Criminal Lawyer: Specialises in criminal laws CrPC, IPC, Evidence Act and various other penal laws.**

**Civil Litigation Lawyer: Specializes in civil laws e.g. taxation laws, excise laws.**

**Legal Analyst: Works for corporate firms or law firms and analyses laws pertaining to the sphere of the company and its operation.**

**Document Drafting Lawyer: Specialises in drafting various documents containing agreements, terms and conditions, case material, etc.**

**Legal Journalist: Covers crime beats, legal proceedings in courts, arbitration courts, international courts and arbitration events.**

**Legal Advisor: Offers consultancy to corporate firms regarding their legal obligations, duties, legal relations with other firms.**

**Government Lawyer: Works for the government and in close coordination with the police.**

**Judge: Offers judgment after conducting the court proceedings and hearing al the concerned parties.**

**Tips for Getting Hired**

**Candidates who do five years BA LLB from top law schools like NLSUI Bangalore, NALSAR Hyderabad get attractive job offers from law firms and ITES firms. Many also opt to start their own practice. All law graduates who wish to practice in the courts have to register themselves in the Bar Council of India (BCI) and practice in courts under senior lawyers.**

**Practical training in court can enhance your chances of getting hired by law firms and with senior lawyers. Though most of the law colleges impart practical legal education to final year law students, it is students who should take initiative and start visiting court proceedings in the final year to understand the day-to-day affair.**

**Top Companies**

**Some of the top law firms in the country are:**

**- Amarchand Mangaldas**

**- AZB & Partners**

**- J Sagar Associates**

**- Khaitan & Co**

**- Luthra & Luthra**

**- Trilegal**

**- Desai & Diwanji**

**- Singhania & Partners**

**- Titus & Co**

**- Wadia Ghandy & Co**

**-Lakshmi Kumaran & Sridharan**

**-Economic Laws Practice**

**- Vaish & Associates**

**Top Institutes**

**-Faculty of Law, University of Delhi**

**-Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi**

**-NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad**

**-National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bangalore**

**-Gujarat National Law University (GNLU)**

**-Symbiosis Society's Law College (SSLC), Pune**

**-National Law University, Jodhpur**

**-National Law Institute University (NLIU), Bhopal**

**-ILS Law College, Pune**

**-Government Law College, Mumbai**

**-Amity Law School, Delhi**

**-Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh**