

# Appearances and Beyond



Centre for Social Justice

# Appearances and Beyond

© Centre for Social Justice 2012

Copies : 500

First Edition : April 2012

Compiled by : **CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**  
C-106, Royal Chinmay, Opp. IOC Pump,  
Next to Simandhar Tower, Off Judge's Bungalow Road,  
Bodakdev, Vastrapur, Ahmedabad - 380 054.

Edited by : Aadal Arsi, Sunetra Deshpande



Design : Rajesh Patel

Printer : Lipi Graphics

Educational material for easy circulation

Acknowledgments:

1. Anuradha Gharti
2. Damini Patel
3. Hetal Bhatt
4. Hasmukh Lal
5. Satyajeet Mazumdar
6. Ishrat

# Index

## Preface

1. Experiences of Training Young Lawyers From Vulnerable Communities 6  
- Nupur
2. Effectiveness of first-hand experience: Bhavnaben Trivedi 15  
- Dilip Vasava
3. He is the only hope for the hopeless: Bipin Jariya 17  
- Aadal Arsi
4. His award is people's trust: Dipak Acharya 19  
- Charkha
5. She dreams of a better tomorrow: Jagruti Joshi 22  
- Lekha Nair
6. Addressing needs of the poorest is service to God: Jivram Rathod 24  
- Sajitha Joshi
7. Creating a wave of change: Kantibhai Mariwad 27  
- Krutika Pillarisett
8. Bridging the gap with law: Karsan Rathod 29  
- Aadal Arsi
9. The man with a determination of steel: Subedar Kevat 31  
- Krutika Pillarisett
10. Giving back to society through law: Mohammad Sindhi 34  
- Sajitha Joshi

|     |  |    |
|-----|--|----|
| 11. | Man with a mission: Piyushbhai Parmar<br>- Lekha Nair                | 37 |
| 12. | The 'cashless' lawyer of Idar: Rasida Dawood Mansuri<br>- Lekha Nair | 40 |
| 13. | Crusader of the poor: Sandeep Purani<br>- Sajitha Joshi              | 43 |
| 14. | Ensuring a life of dignity for all: Udayan Trivedi<br>- Aadal Arsi   | 46 |
| 15. | Professionalism with a human touch: Altaf Ghasura<br>- Charkha       | 48 |
| 16. | Social Justice Lawyering: An Emerging Concept<br>- Nupur             | 51 |

# Preface

Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) is a pioneering organisation in the arena of Access to Justice for the Vulnerable. It has worked extensively for the rights of the dalits, tribals, women, muslims , prisoners, disaster affected people, land rights and other vulnerable groups. It focuses on using law for social transformation. It works on four strategies, namely, legal awareness, legal services, law reforms and strengthening alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. It works on principles of social justice lawyering defined as follows :

*"Social justice lawyering is necessarily an activist lawyering, which transforms the power relations and thus facilitates the assertion of rights and entitlements of the poor through legal processes. The traditional legal aid is directed towards the protection of individuals in specific cases. It is intended to defend the poor but no effort is made to encourage the formation and effective enforcement of the laws for the poor. In contrast, social justice lawyering goes much beyond the traditional legal assistance and looks towards becoming an effective resource in the empowerment of the impoverished. It focuses on social transformation through use of law."*

CSJ has a three pronged strategy to respond to the ground level situation of human rights:

1. Strengthening and sensitising systems for ensuring human rights of the vulnerable.
2. Developing paralegals as a bridge between the lawyers and community.
3. Developing community lawyers as change agents.

CSJ today has 260 lawyers trained by it of which 40 lawyers are formally associated at the moment with CSJ.

This book makes an effort to capture the learnings from training and the journey of some of these lawyers as an example for others to follow. We hope that the lives of these lawyers who have made tremendous shifts in their personal and professional journeys will inspire many others to follow suit. We also hope that the learnings from training and associating with such lawyers will be used by other organisations doing similar trainings.

**Gagan Sethi**  
*Vice-Chairperson*

# 1. Experiences of Training Young Lawyers From Vulnerable Communities

- Nupur

Centre for Social Justice is a pioneering organization in the field of access to justice. It has done seminal work in the area of setting up institutional intervention in order to set up a response mechanism that can address the situation of human rights violation at the grassroots. It has evolved training methodology for human rights training of various categories of people like lawyers, paralegals, teachers, police etc. that combines principles of androgogy and human rights and law.

The section below captures the process used for training lawyers:

The selection of the candidate is the most critical thing in any programme for fellowship or capacity building. The right choice made is half the battle won. When CSJ began its work, there was a division in opinion regarding taking fresh lawyers or more experienced ones. Legal education in India is insufficient and of extremely poor quality. It does not add any competence that will prepare the student to face the world of actual law practice. It is based on passing exams by reading guidebooks.

When a young lawyer enters the profession, he is faced with several barriers. On the one hand, his education has not taught him any skills that enable him to handle cases. On the other hand, the legal profession is highly family based where the legal practice passes on from generation to generation.

A young lawyer finds it difficult to develop a clientele base in the initial years. This forces him to join a senior but unfortunately, in most cases, apprenticeship with seniors is less of learning and more of exploitation. Hence there are very few who can independently manage to set up their own practice. This explains the reason why the number of people enrolled at the Bar is lesser than those actually practicing.

This is a systemic shackle of deficit that all entrants to the legal profession face. In addition to these generic shackles, there are additional shackles that are faced by the young lawyers from the vulnerable communities.

As Pravin Parmar, our first batch lawyer describes, "I come from a family of wage labourers. I studied till B.A. while continuing to work as a wage labourer only to realize that it does not get you a job. Some one advised me to do law as it gives you a self earning opportunity. I had to give up my daily earning because I had to walk 12 Kms to the law college. I thought I will learn there but there were no lectures, no library and no teaching. I discontinued college and only went to give exam to get my degree."

*Extreme poverty is one of the barriers people face. For those living a daily hand to mouth existence, the choice to study in itself is a difficult one.*

As Kanti Macwan, another one of our lawyer describes his experience after hand holding the fight for the murder of a Dalit, "I am from the scavenger community. I struggled hard to become a lawyer and then was drawn to the work being undertaken by the organization. When I was approached by the Navsarjan workers, I left every thing and got behind the case. We didn't sleep or eat for two days. I handled the case very well. And yet, when the *besna* [death ceremony] was organized, I stood out. I was not allowed near the *shamshan*. I asked my self the question "*who am I fighting for?*"

*Caste based discrimination is another challenge that these lawyers have to learn to handle. While the barrier does not surface when their services are being sought, it does not change their social reality.*

In one of my altercations with a senior Muslim lawyer who was also a unit coordinator, I lost my cool over the fact that he is not able to get a suitable place for office and in the same breadth, I fired him for not getting lawyers from other communities. After a very heated discussion, one person in the team very softly said "*ben*, I cannot change the name I have grown up with and till I carry that name, neither will we get houses in the main locality, nor will we find other community lawyers to join us." It was a huge effort to convert that centre into a more heterogeneous centre.

Character assassination of young women lawyers is often resorted by the legal fraternity to disempower them. These women lawyers face the resistance not only externally but also from their male colleagues and the organization has had to create strong buffering mechanisms.

Poor education of 20 years cannot be overcome in a short span. The education has not taught them to think, analyse, articulate or express. Their existential realities have not given them an exposure to any of this. We have to accept and work around this limitation and not expect too much in a short time.

Lack of knowledge of English is another barrier that comes in the way of being a good lawyer. There is very little vernacular material that is available on latest position of law and the allied matters.

When CSJ began its work, we were divided in opinion regarding taking fresh lawyers or more experienced ones. We tried both the options and eventually opted for the young lawyers over senior lawyers. The reason was simple. The extremely corrupt legal profession hardens an individual beyond repair. While the person may have learnt certain basic skills, he also learns the not so good practices prevalent in the legal profession, exploiting the client being one of them. Sensitizing this mindset has proved difficult.

The selection is done based on an open interview and written test. While the degree in law is a must, there is no expectation that they will know the law. What is expected is that they have a need to learn, have high initiative and have a will to make a difference in society. It is possible that many of them can fake these during the interview, specially the last one. However, we live with the same reality.

### **Creating An Identity**

One of the things that made the program a success is the process of identity building that went along with the training. Lawyers who came for the training came with dual objective. One was the need to learn but we cannot definitely deny the importance of the fact that there was a certain monetary benefit attached to the training. There was a lot of emphasis made in the process to focus on building them up as individuals, as responsible citizens, as lawyers with a difference. This helped in creating a new identity for them. Many people running similar programs complain that the lawyers who join them are very “professional” {read money minded} and not responsive/ sensitive to social issues. It is not important "*who they come as*" that make them different. It is what **WE** do with them after they come for the program is what makes them different. This is some thing not understood by many.



In the initial years, when these lawyers entered the Bar, many of them were ridiculed as being “mafatiyas” (for free, of no value) or as lawyers who didn't have work and therefore were doing cases free of cost. Gradually, they established themselves as competent lawyers who were bringing in new perspectives, new legal strategies, information about new laws. They started being recognized as leaders in the field of law.

What is within and outside the domain of a lawyer was a constant struggle. The traditional mindset reinforced the role of a lawyer within the court room. It was a constant engagement with the lawyers to make them see their role as community lawyers and having their roles beyond court room lawyering and contributing to training, legal awareness, advocacy, research etc. The term we collectively evolved was **Social Justice Lawyering**.

Building of identity is a key component in the young lawyers' training program. This takes place at two levels. Firstly at the level of self where efforts are made to help the individual look at herself positively as an empowered individual capable for bringing about change. The shifts made are increased self esteem, belief in self and looking at oneself not as a victim but as an actor in the existing social framework impacted by the same and having the capacity to bring about systemic change. The focus also is to create a sense of belongingness to the larger community of the vulnerable therefore looking beyond the identity that one was born with. Seeing oneself in the larger context where similar other vulnerable communities exist and seeing parallel with one's situation helps them see themselves as change agents in the broader human rights field in addition to being leaders in their own community.

The second level is the creation of their professional identity as social justice lawyers. This is done by working with them on a value system that they will collectively hold, increasing their accountability and efficiency and quality thereby bringing them recognition from their own community as well as from the legal fraternity. Today CSJ lawyers are recognized for bringing in latest laws and judgments and innovations in court room practice. One of the methods used for identity building is that the lawyer herself personally takes the SUNAVANI, a law journal in Gujarati well read by lawyers and judges alike and give it to key stakeholders. Another method used is to participate in or invite participation of State Legal Services Authority in legal awareness programme.

### **Why Community Based?**

It is always possible to get better trained lawyers' from elite colleges and orient them towards human rights issues. However, we made the choice to select lawyers from the community. The decision was based on the assumption that being from the community, they will have a better understanding of the situation of the community, they will have a fire in them arising out of facing discrimination and they will be long term investments in the community. On hindsight, this choice has been a good one. There are many instances where the lawyers may have left the organization and yet have been actively responding to the community's needs. During the interaction, a lot of effort is made to identify their personal hurt and convert it into a need to fight back.

**The Programme Design:** After several models, we have arrived at the following design as an ideal model:

| Year | Focus  | Payment       | Remarks  |
|------|--|---------------|--|
| 1st  | Building self and identity of social justice lawyer and understanding of the social issues | Rs 2,000 p.m  | This is the period where the person is encouraged to read up laws related to social problems, assist in court in order to familiarize themselves with the atmosphere and understand the proceedings. They are expected to spend a week in court, a week in villages, a week studying and a week in other activities per month in the organization. |
| 2nd  | Building identity as lawyers   | Rs. 2,500 p.m | This is the period where the person is encouraged to start filing court cases along with a senior lawyer and also be involved in other activities of the centre.   |
| 3rd  | Strengthening identity as lawyers  | Rs. 2,000 p.m | This is the period where a senior lawyer is paid by the organization to help the young lawyer to acquire needed skills to practice in court . The lawyers are allowed to undertake private practice. Efforts are also made to help them sharpen their skills in other non court areas for application of law                                       |

| Year             | Focus   | Payment          | Remarks   |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| 4th              | Weaning off   | On per day basis | With an increased emphasis on private practice, a per day relationship is worked out where they contribute to various activities of the centre like litigation, advocacy, research and awareness. |
| Wean-<br>ing off | Creating spaces for sensitized lawyers to give their time to human rights issue | On per day basis | The lawyers contribute to different activities of the organization like the research, training but are largely on their own.  |

This model can be further shortened to three years.

The young lawyers' training program is designed in a graded manner. There are different levels or stages identified and people move from one level to another over the process. At any given point in time, there are several people at each of the decided levels and the interplay and co-dependency between the levels is designed.

The shift is from self identity to professional competence in an increasing manner every year. Clearly articulating the levels and engaging with people with clear understanding that they are being seen in that space helps in building a realistic expectation from each other, tracking progress and ensuring right type of support.

This co-dependent structure also helps in building strong accountability systems.

During the first year, the lawyers go through an orientation programme for three months. This is divided into alternating periods of two weeks duration where they are spending first two weeks for contact session and two weeks for practical application sessions that helps them apply or see the practicality of what they have learnt. This could be either in the field or in the court or in the organization.

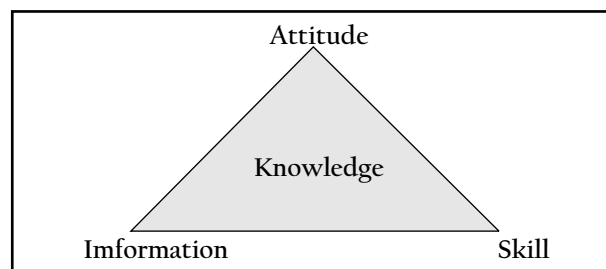
They come for contact sessions where they are provided with information related to various laws concerning social issues. The same is applied by them through a designed homework assignment. The homework is supervised by the unit coordinator. The participants are also part of collective reflection process of the organization that helps them to sharpen their understanding.

The logic behind the payment of stipend, the way it is conceived, is that in the first year, they are raw and are only learning and not actually performing. In the second year, they start delivering and hence the stipend increases. In the third year, they are allowed to practice on their own and it is assumed that they will start getting some income from that. Hence the stipend reduces. After that they move to a per day payment relationship where they are compensated for their time on a daily basis. This varies from person to person and could be between 2 to 10 days a month. The more skilled people move to an advisory capacity where they hand-hold younger trainees and groom them.

The methodological underpinnings applied in the programme are described below:

### **Alternative Legal Education**

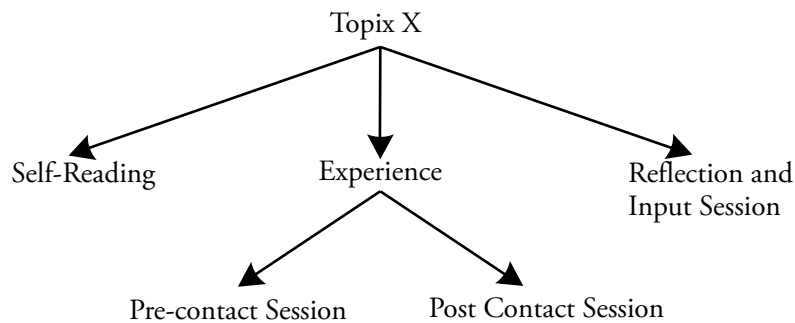
- a. Alternative law teaching focuses on relating facts and principles with feelings and expectations.
- b. Alternative Legal Education integrates Attitude/ Perspective, Information & Skill in a holistic manner.



Example: Session on Domestic Violence should have

- Information about which court will handle the case.
- Identifying the nature of offence (bailable/nonbailable, cognizable/noncognizable)
- Understanding of the issue being in public domain.
- Evidence related aspects.
- Understanding the provisions of sec. 498A including the essential components of dowry demand.
- The politics of over using 498A.
- Conciliation and negotiation.
- Handling a victim.
- Skill of drafting an FIR.

- c. Alternative Legal Education focuses on “How to Learn” rather than “TEACH” law
  1. Facilitate learning without spoon-feeding
  2. Ensure sufficient practice of basic skills
  3. Create opportunity for experiential learning
- d. Alternative Legal Education is a combination of experience based self-work & input session.



- e. Law is not a stand alone subject. It operates in a context.
- f. Information is not enough.
- g. Accompaniment & mentoring is important.
- h. Need to build a person & her identity must be addressed.
- i. Training is contextual.
- j. Different people learn differently.

### **Sustainability**

This is a sustainable model because it balances between learning and performing. It adds to the human capital of the community. It equips an individual to survive in an open market economy while simultaneously contributing to the social issues. It helps them compete with the privileged lawyers who have the advantage of inherited practice and backing of their social standing.

### **Success Rate**

The success rate of this model is about 50%, i.e. about 50% people who join the process continue till the end. Our argument is that an elitist law school doing a five year course spends much more than what is spent on this programme. We look at the investment not as an investment over that individual but as an investment in the

community. Even if the person does not continue with the organization or for human rights, an alternate employment has been created. This has to be looked at from the point of view of increased economic boycott of the Muslims, lack of employment opportunities amongst the tribals and dalits and inability of the women to break social norms and be self reliant.

### **Dealing With The Market**

When one is creating a cadre that has its own market potential, it is unrealistic to expect them to continue with the organisation once their market potential grows beyond what the organisation is capable of remunerating. Instead of looking at it as a bottleneck and always be at the receiving end of people trained by us leaving us, the programme is designed with a clear exit strategy. A person comes in, gets trained and moves out over a designed process. This ensures that the things remain in the hands of the organisation where we are not caught unawares. This also ensures that we have with us, at a given point of time the required competence and are not stuck with inexperienced staff that can't deliver. It gives an opportunity to senior people to find meaning in contributing to the society without having to curtail their earning needs. It is more sustainable for the organization because at any given point we have a mix of young, mid-level and senior members thereby ensuring cost effectivity in the design. Having only the inexperienced will mean poor delivery and having only the experienced will mean high costs.

Finding women lawyers at the grassroots level is quite a task. Sustaining them is a greater task than finding them. In most cases, the women we have engaged with have been, in their personal spaces, struggling with difficult marriages, broken relations or other social stress. In some cases, they are so consumed with their own personal struggles that moving them out of it has been impossible. In yet another set of cases, the fact that they are struggling itself has been a reason for them to join and continue. Practically, where the woman is in a position of financially supporting the family, their retention has been higher. Empowering the women also opens up another avenue i.e. of active party politics. In semi-rural areas where we don't find too many women taking leadership, these women, because of their identity as being sensitive to the issues of poor and because of their relations and linkages in the community, become very attractive to political parties. It has been a hard organizational decision to let go of these women for their political aspirations.

## 2. Effectiveness of first-hand experience: Bhavnaben Trivedi

Bhavnaben I. Trivedi  
Education: B.Sc., LL.B.  
Address: 8, Nandanvan Society,  
At & Po. Modasa, Dist. Sabarkantha.  
Mobile: 94281 97997

- As told to Dilip Vasava

“My experiences and organizational strength have played an important role in creating the image of a different woman advocate among those dealing with laws on a daily basis.” These are the words of Bhavnaben Trivedi, a lawyer from Modasa. After completing her education in law in 1998, she pursued private practice for 10 years. Then she was selected as the Public Prosecutor and now she is practising in the Sabarkantha District Court.

After completing her LL.B., she started her career with private practice and it proved to be very challenging. At such a time, if an NGO provides the much-needed platform it helps one develop a true understanding of law. Sharing her association with the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), Bhavnaben says, “In 1999, under the guidance of advocate Nilesh Joshi from Modasa, I met representatives from the organisation who conducted an interview and selected me for the post of legal advisor at Modasa.”

Bhavnaben adds, “During trainings offered by the organization and field work, I came in close contact with villages and many aspects associated with them. I got first-hand experience about handling the different types of legal cases. Keeping this in focus, I also participated in many awareness workshops. To help people develop an understanding of the various laws and their usage, I also supported many awareness programmes.”

There are many misunderstandings about law and one of them being that those who understand law are superior to common people. This has led to many attitudinal issues at both ends. That's when Bhavnaben took it upon herself to prove to rural people that everyone is equal in the eyes of law and even lawyers have a sensitive side to them. She accepted that CSJ had played a major role in helping her imbibe this fact. The visits to villages where she witnessed the condition of the villagers created quite an impact on her.

She also got complete training regarding how to link people's issues with legal matters, how to draft these issues and how to present the cases in Court through CSJ. As a result of this, she could gain a direction in her professional careers, informs Bhavnaben. She learnt that what one experiences first-hand proves to be more effective. To explain this, she shares her experience about the jail movement launched by CSJ. As part of this campaign, a study on the legal processes involved in releasing convicts on personal bond<sup>1</sup> was carried out and this really increased her self-confidence.

In her professional career, a direction was set and as a woman it was natural that issues related to women touched her more. In her civil practice, Bhavnaben started laying more stress on cases related to violence against women and women's rights. She got involved in the process of representing the cases of litigants in Court and getting a date for the cases. In that, the process of preparing the witness was the toughest, says Bhavnaben.

After working in the judicial magistrate's Court, she got an opportunity to work in the District Court. In 2008, she was selected as the Additional Public Prosecutor to investigate criminal cases in the District Court. She was part of the team of high-level officers including

the Director General of Police, Assistant Commissioner of Police and District Collector. This gave her an opportunity to make in-depth investigations of rapes, murders, atrocities, violence and other critical cases. She considers this 10-month stint with this team as the golden period of her career. She says that political disagreements and pressures were the hurdles that she faced during this period. As she stood up against them, her services were terminated.

As she was very interested in reading along with her profession, she has read many books related to legal and social issues. Sharing her views about Centre for Social Justice she says, "The organization provides useful trainings to raise the level of the lawyers - right from the lower rung. As a lot of encouragement is given to surge ahead in this sector, it inspires us to never quit this sector." As she uses the lessons drawn from many experiences at the organization in her cases even today, she says that the organization plays the role of a guide. Her interest of reading is never satiated and that's why the process of reading is a continuous one for her. Reading is very important in the field of law and she has decided to read more and work towards making her knowledge sound.

<sup>1</sup>Despite Justice Krishna Iyer's judgment that says bail and not jail should be the rule, the prisons are full of under-trial prisoners. Many of them are denied bail on the grounds of poverty. This is in contravention of the Supreme Court guidelines that a poor person may be released on personal bond. This shows the limitation of organisations whose interventions are designed only at Supreme Court and who lack the ability to implement the guideline at the ground level.



### 3. He is the only hope for the hopeless: Bipin Jariya

Bipin Jariya

Education: B. A., LL.B.

Address: A/44, Ambicanagar,  
Anandnagar, Bharuch.

Mobile: 9426813058

- As told to Aadal Arsi

He is a veteran in the field of social justice. Be it taking on the goons, being beaten up for supporting the needy or earning the reputation of offering legal advice for free, he has done it all. And that's what makes Bipin Jariya a name to reckon with in Bharuch.

He tries recalling his first encounter with CSJ and then laughs it off saying, "It was really long ago, in fact, it was way back in 1995. I don't even remember the month but what I remember clearly is the way it changed my outlook of life. From being a lawyer to becoming a lawyer for social justice: it is the difference between a professional and a social worker." After being trained on issues related to rights of labourers, women and children, "I felt equipped to take on the guilty. What was special about these trainings was that though they were rich in content, they taught us how to use them too. It was not bookish knowledge but hands-on training of how to go out there and thrash out issues.

This is something no law school has ever taught".

Armed with the knowledge of how to address human rights issues, he took on many cases. He remembers, "If it was the need, CSJ was ready to spend all the way to the Supreme Court, only justice for the needy mattered. Interestingly, many litigants not just derived monetary but also emotional support from CSJ. I give full credit for what I am today to the mentors at CSJ. They never questioned what we did, but they were always there to support us and our decisions."

Though all this has helped Bipinbhai make a mark in the world of law, his peers have moved up the rung of the 'success ladder'. Commenting on that, Bipinbhai says, "If money is the focus, then the true focus of life is lost. Many junior advocates look at this as a well-paying profession, but what they need to understand is that this is a noble

profession which can be used as a tool to help others. If you learn to apply this learning to life, even the most reputed of magistrates will trust you and think twice before ruling against your case. Such is the power of truth.”

Bipinbhai recollected a case which reaffirmed his faith in social justice. This was when a timid and scared woman approached him to fight a case against her husband. Bipinbhai's training and counselling changed that woman so much that she, who used to be beaten up by her husband every single day, actually slapped him in the presence of many people when he used abusive language. And today, she is working for the betterment of society. She has a purpose and she is a very happy woman. This is the might of legal knowledge. One learns to stand up for one's rights and does not take oppression lying low.

His association with CSJ's legal aid centre has taken him to far-flung villages where people have been bearing the brunt of ignorance for all these years. “Such is the support of CSJ in the remotest of villages that now, anti-social elements are scared of creating a nuisance as they know that the poor will reach out to us. They too have a platform to raise their voice and stand up for their rights.”

A case close to Bipinbhai's heart is the one in which he helped 10 tribal families retain the land which was their only source of livelihood. “I was threatened, bribed and beaten up for handling the case. But that was not why we had filed the case in the first place. The agenda was to seek justice and we fought relentlessly to get it. CSJ has taught us not to lose sight of the goal and we have also learnt all the different ways and tactics that one has to employ to reach the destination.”

His mission in life is to keep working for the rights of women, children and the destitute. “I am there for those who have none.” He is a voracious reader and keeps himself updated about the happenings in the field of law. Post-retirement, he is ready to offer his services to organizations working on legal issues. He would also like to mentor the future lawyers about the art of dealing with people. Though many charge a high fee of Rs 1 lakh per case, they forget that the person sitting opposite to them is not a blank cheque but a human being who has approached them with a problem. “If we just treat our clients as humans, a lot can change in the world of law and the image of lawyers will surely undergo a sea change,” he signs off.

## 4. His award is people's trust: Dipak Acharya

Dipak Acharya  
Education: B.Com., LL.B.  
Address: L/1/99, Kidana Society,  
At & Po. Gandhidham, Dist. Kutch.  
Mobile: 9377198865

- As told to Charkha

Dipak Acharya is the son of an astrologer, but instead of going the horoscopic way, Acharya chose to pursue his career in the world of law. After completing his B.Com., he wanted to opt for a career which would earn him money along with the satisfaction of being helpful to the needy. So, law seemed to be an obvious choice. Just as he enrolled for the course, the earthquake hit Kutch and Acharya learnt about the Centre for Social Justice and their need for paralegal volunteers who can provide legal assistance to the earthquake victims to seek government aid. Being a native of Kutch district, Acharya was inspired to apply for a job with CSJ.

“I joined CSJ to develop an understanding and get hands-on experience in the legal world. As my family background did not offer any

exposure to law, I felt the need for practical experience along with my legal studies. So I applied for the post of paralegal volunteer at CSJ and was selected. From September 2001, I used to visit various villages in Kutch<sup>1</sup> district and spread awareness about government assistance. We also ensured that the people got government aid according to the rules,” says Acharya.

He started his career as a paralegal when he was still a law student. Post-earthquake, CSJ and Abhiyan had set up SETU centres for a cluster of 10 villages. The purpose of the SETU centres was to respond to the relief and rehabilitation needs of the earthquake-affected people. The role of the paralegal was to identify claims and lacunae in the assessment and payment systems and help people get their compensation amount.

---

<sup>1</sup>Dipak was part of an interesting post-disaster response model where legal action was integrated within development support services. The District Judge was given the powers of Lokayukta, who in turn had given authority letters to SETU paralegals. This made following up of claims very simple.

Acharya received training on various subjects like human rights, labour rights, women's legal rights, dalit rights and environment laws. "These training sessions at CSJ helped in developing my understanding about the alternative justice and right-based issues of people from different communities.

I observed that people suffering from oppression used to fear filing a complaint with the police, as police discouraged them from filing complaints. But whenever we approached the police as a CSJ volunteer, they took our point seriously because the police knew that we were well versed with the laws," explains Acharya.

At the age of 32, any lawyer would be considered as a junior in terms of practice and experience but Acharya has defied this impression, thanks to his work experience at CSJ. He says, "After completing my LL.B., I registered myself as a lawyer and got permission for practising in the court of law<sup>2</sup>. Since my initial days in court, many of the senior lawyers were not ready to believe that I was novice in my career. After reading the drafts of my pleadings, observing my arguments and representations in the courtroom, they thought that I had a

minimum of 5-6 years of experience as a lawyer. This was because of my training at CSJ," says young Acharya.

He further adds, "During my training at CSJ, many subject experts discussed the latest judgments on different legal issues. This helped me in understanding the technicalities of laws. So my impression among senior lawyers is that of an informed and updated lawyer. Many a times, senior lawyers call me to know about the latest judgment on several issues."

Acharya's training at CSJ has set him apart from other practising lawyers. He says, "While many lawyers look at making maximum money from every case, I make sure that my client's case is solved at the minimum expense. However, this takes longer time than normal as I don't go for the 'other' kind of practice to solve the case. But I get 100 per cent satisfaction by working in this manner."

Presently, Acharya is mostly involved in civil appeals and rights-based issues and he has got recognition for his work. Before filing the case in court, he works on every possible solution for an out-of-court settlement so that the issue can be solved at minimum expense. Talking

---

<sup>2</sup> In a rare instance, Dipak got recognition for the rights of a foetus and got compensation for an unborn child.

about one of his cases, Acharya says, “About six years ago, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited had laid a pipeline from Mundra to Delhi. It paid some compensation to the farmers but it didn't pay compensation for the loss of crop suffered by farmers due to the work done. In 2007, it issued a notification of completion of work. I wrote to the company on behalf of the farmers and also made a representation at the Collector's office. We also staged a protest outside the Collector's office. As a result of this, without going to the Court, we ensured that the company paid the due compensation to the farmers.<sup>3</sup>”

Acharya shares his satisfaction, “Of course, I haven't received any big public recognition or awards, but the respect I see in the people's eye is my biggest award. I have received the award of their trust in me. I believe that if one wants to work for the people, one will have to find solutions for people's issue from within in an innovative way.”

He stresses on extensive study for practising alternative lawyering. “It is necessary to take up detailed research and judgments should be studied properly to get a favourable result for any issue. This is a must in the alternative mode of lawyering.”

---

<sup>3</sup> Industrialization throws up legal issues that are very technical. Imagining that a taluka-level lawyer will be able to match up to the highly skilled lawyers, who are well paid by industries, is to live in a fool's paradise. But Dipak and his colleagues have demonstrated that where there is passion, skills are not a barrier. This team of grassroots lawyers is a part of a strong campaign for fisher folk's rights against Adani and other industries. The team has given them a tough fight and protected the rights of people in many cases.

## 5. She dreams of a better tomorrow: Jagruti Joshi

Jagruti Jaisukhbhai Joshi

Education: M.A., LL.B.

Kanooni Sewa ane Margdarshan Kendra

Address: Bileshwar Krupa, Oamnagar -3

Block 2, Opp. Gokul Garden, Hanumanpura Road,

Amreli 365 601. Ph 2792 228068

- As told to Lekha Nair

A fragile, simple and nervous young lady in her late 20s walks into the room, smiles and introduces herself as Jagruti Jaisukhbhai Joshi. This advocate from Amreli completed her Masters in Arts before pursuing Law. She started practising law five years ago and though these are the early days of her career she is crystal clear about her dreams.

Though she belongs to a middle-class family, her parents encouraged Jagruti to pursue law. She did not even know how to file a police complaint, nor had she visited any Court or heard about its proceedings, but she always wanted to do something for the poor and the distressed. So, law seemed to be the best course of action. After completing her course, she started assisting a senior advocate at the Lathi Court in Amreli.

He happened to be a family friend of Jagruti Joshi but he did not support her. Every day when she walked into his office and waited, hoping to learn the proceedings of the Court, she ended up wasting her time. As days passed by, the attitude of the senior lawyer worsened. She was asked to draft cases with incomplete details and was discouraged from doing much work. She was not even given a place to sit. Often she would sit at the temple premises or walk around the village just to kill time. Frustration and anger crept in and Jagruti thought of quitting. That's when she heard of the three-month training programme offered by the Centre for Social Justice. This introduced her to a new world of law.

She learnt a lot from field work and practical training sessions at the centre.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jagruti joined our training based on the criteria of being a woman. Getting a woman lawyer itself is a challenge, especially in Saurashtra. Getting women to step out of their homes is a bigger challenge. Jagruti also demonstrates how transformation takes place in mindsets. Though she belongs to the Brahmin community, she has overcome the barriers and practices that socially exclude the vulnerable.

“When we went to Chattisgarh for field work, I was exposed to the harsh realities of life<sup>1</sup>. It taught me to lead life in whatever condition I was faced with. Earlier, I would carry my own water bottle and wouldn't eat food from outside, but experience has changed my perspective about life.” This experience gave her a renewed confidence which was visible when she went to attend meetings and trainings at different levels. Jagruti has till now taken up 40-45 cases, which are mainly from Amreli and the surroundings of Babra taluka.

Recollecting a few cases, she says, “Sunitaben, a 16-year-old resident of Lunadhara village was on her way to meet her sister at Baghasara village. As she was waiting for the bus, an acquaintance offered to drop her. On the way, she was raped and kept at an undisclosed location for three days. The accused, who was much older wanted to marry her. Her parents lodged a complaint against the accused under Sections 362, 366 and 375 of the IPC. I took up the case and ensured that the accused was punished. The Court sentenced him to 10-year imprisonment and a compensation of Rs. 85,000 was given to Sunitaben and a fine of Rs. 30,000 was imposed.”

She also helped Savitaben, a divorcee, to get monthly maintenance of Rs. 1,000 and alimony of Rs 1.5 lakh from her husband. She ensured that Kuntaben's

son got admission at Babra school. The school authorities now provide books and uniform to him.

Another interesting case is that of Dhirubhai of Sabarkundla village, Amradhihad. He had kept a gold chain in his bank locker. Negligence by bank authorities resulted in some other person lifting the gold chain. Dhirubhai filed a case against the manager with Jagruti's help. He received Rs 70,000 as compensation. There are a number of cases in which Jagruti has helped women get maintenance from their husbands. She moves around the village identifying issues and guiding people to access the law. “When I move around the village, people mistake me for a sales girl. They inquire about my caste and salary. Earlier, I used to feel shy to answer, but now I am confident about the work I do.”

For achievers like Jagruti, sky is the limit. The young lady wants to work relentlessly for the socially backward and underprivileged people. She wants to spend the rest of her life for the community and people. “The condition of society is stark. I cannot change the life of everyone but if my actions can help a few individuals, then it is worth it.”

Her message to the young and old alike is that hard work and persistence always pays off.

## 6. Addressing needs of the poorest is service to God: Jivram Rathod

Jivram Rathod

Education: B.A., LL.B.

Address: Ahwa Mission Colony,

At & Po. Ahwa, Dangs.

Mobile: 9408738890

- As told to Sajitha Joshi

Jivram Rathod is among the lucky few who get to grow up in the lap of nature. Brought up amid the thick forest in Dangs, the dense beauty of the wilderness prompted him to give back the goodness in abundance to society. Jivram chose to realise his dream by training himself to become an advocate. His aim was to help the needy and those excluded from society. Jivram was quite conversant with the problems of tribals and communities which are an integral part of the district. The people of Dangs have preserved forestland with utmost sanctity and love. Jivram considers the land to belong to him as much as to the people of Dangs and is always ready to help the people, especially through his knowledge of the law.

Jivram has been practising law since 16 years of which the last seven years have been spent as a public prosecutor at the District Court. While reminiscing his initial days, Jivram acknowledged the role of the Centre for Social Justice

(CSJ) in shaping his views towards social justice. Memories of working with CSJ are still etched in his mind. His association with CSJ began in 1995, when he was a fellow advocate. Pareshbhai, one of the senior advocates of the district, was Jivram's guiding force and helped him understand the nuances of social justice. The initial days at the CSJ district centre revolved around forestland issues and rights of tribal families. There were many fellow advocates who were involved in this crusade and the centre became fully functional in 1996. Jivram was closely associated with CSJ's district legal aid centre which took up cases for tribal families, destitute and women.

Jivram has attended innumerable trainings organised by CSJ from 1995 to 2004. He vouched for the fact that the trainings provided by CSJ on law and its usage have been very important. The teachings and trainings are still useful to him. As the trainings were imparted in



an interactive mode, Jivram says, “It is easier to remember and they are very effective in practice.” He has completed eight modules of training in social justice from CSJ. Prior to becoming an advocate, Jivram has also served at the district panchayat office as the chairperson of the governing body for over five years. All these experiences have helped him understand people's woes and problems to the core. As he is well aware of the issues pertaining to villages and their development, Jivram always keeps a close eye on cases related to forest land holdings.

One such pivotal case in his life is that in which the Court took 13 years to pronounce a judgment. The case was filed by the forest department officials against 44 villagers of a remote village in Dangs. They had accused them of encroachment. Of the 44 accused, 15 were women. The case was being tried since 1990 and after a long struggle the villagers finally won in 2003. The trial of the case witnessed the death of many under trials, constant changes and transfer of at least six Judges. Jivram triumphed in this case and did not charge a single rupee for his selfless efforts.

However, the situation has changed now, reiterates Jivram. With the implementation of The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers

(Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, both the forest officials and community have become aware of their rights and duties. This has considerably brought down the incidences of conflicts between the department and the people.

While Jivram was associated with the district legal aid centre, he has received the award for managing the 'Best Centre' from CSJ. Even after Jivram was appointed as a government lawyer in Valsad, he continued to support the centre till a replacement was found. He extended his support by giving guidance on Sundays, holidays and at night after his duty hours.

His repertoire as a social justice lawyer rose with the growth of the district legal aid centre. Jivram says, “People have accepted me as one of their own because of the humane manner in which I deal with them.” Though law is considered to be a high-notch profession, Jivram has been able to demystify the aura of an advocate in society. He strongly believes in doing well for society and most importantly for needy families.

Since the last seven years, Jivram is practising as a public prosecutor with specialisation in the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988. However, he doesn't think twice before lending a helping hand to anyone who needs legal aid, even if it means working at night.

He has promised to himself that post-retirement, he will spend his time helping people and educating them about the importance of legal aid. He also believes that service to the poorest is service to God. On a high note, Jivram requests young advocates to choose the

correct path- that of service to the needy, especially when faced with various options in their professional life. He also advises them to be thorough in legal matters, laws and he stresses on the need to be well read.

## 7. Creating a wave of change: Kantibhai Mariwad

Kantibhai Mariwad  
Education: B.A., LL.M.  
Kanooni Sahay Kendra  
Alkapuri Road, Anjali Provision Store  
Polo Ground, Himatnagar, Sabarkantha.  
Mobile: 9909963407

- As told to Krutika Pillarisett

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.*

- Robert Frost

Kanti Mangalbhai Mariwad from Sarvodayanagar near Modasa may have never heard the above lines but his mission in life bears a striking similarity to the thoughts conveyed in these lines. Doing his B.A., LL.M. from North Gujarat University was no mean feat for him as his parents are labourers and did not approve of his choice of vocation initially. Home visits by police officers to discourage him from taking up cases only made matters worse. It was the respect he got from those he fought for that changed his parents' view. And he owes this success and respect to the training module at the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ).

He says, "I learnt the intricacies of social justice at CSJ." Kantibhai was always more inclined towards fighting for the rights of the downtrodden, considering the fact that he had faced many of these

problems in his own household. An abusive father taught him the stark realities of life at a tender age. He knew then he wanted to do something for the numerous women who had to bear abusive husbands and other atrocities like his own mother. But he lacked a guide and mentor, and that role was filled in by the CSJ trainings. He lacked confidence but his role at CSJ included performing street plays and giving public speeches about pertinent issues and this helped boost his morale and confidence.

"Studying law at the university only imparted bookish knowledge, but it was the hands-on training imparted by CSJ that changed my work style tremendously. I learnt to look at things as a human being first and then as a lawyer. The difference between me and a professional lawyer is that I consider money secondary to attaining justice for the client," states the 35-year-old lawyer. Travelling 100 kms on a daily basis to cater to the legal needs of the poor is not everyone's dream, but for Kantibhai nothing is a deterrent in the path of

doing his bit for society. Though he admits there are days when he feels like quitting, spending more time with his family and leading a more laidback life like his peers, it is the thought of the many women in villages who are branded witches just because of their appearance or social standing and the torture they go through that keeps him going. His work in cases of women atrocities is talked about in his village and he smiles sheepishly when he says that his family beams with pride when people thank him for his legal aid and assistance. His youngest son, who is seven years old, has already decided that he wants to follow his father's footsteps and wear the black robe commanding respect and trust.

An incident during the initial years of his eight-year practice left an indelible mark on him. A woman from the tribal belt of Khedbrahma was branded a witch and held responsible for children falling ill in the village. The woman, a widow, was boycotted by villagers and tortured until death. This incident shook Kantibhai to the core and since then he has been fighting such cases determinedly. But he laments the lack of a separate Bill for a crime like witch hunting, which is rampant in the tribal areas of Gujarat.

“If we look at national laws, most witch hunt cases are dealt under Section 323 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which prescribes one year's imprisonment and Rs 1,000 fine to anyone who causes harm voluntarily. In other words, the punishment for brutalising a woman by calling her a witch could be the same as that for slapping a person. This is a loophole in the legal system and the accused get away with less punishment than they deserve. A woman can be branded a witch for any supposed reason, for being responsible for someone's illness or death, crop failure or cattle death. On many occasions, she is branded a witch to prevent her from getting her share in the property, women staying alone are targeted the most,” he informs.

On a concluding note, he says, “A national law aimed at eradicating the practice may be more effective. I have written to the concerned authorities about the same. We also conducted a two-day seminar in the villages, where such incidents occur often as it is important to educate them about this issue. I am hoping we succeed in our fight against this malpractice. The day a specific law tackling this issue is passed, it will be my biggest reward<sup>1</sup>.”

---

<sup>1</sup> Kanti demonstrates the shift that a lawyer makes from a taluka lawyer practising mundane cases in Court to a holistic lawyer who understands the relation between law and society, looks beyond the Court and includes advocacy with media, legislature and bureaucracy, research and mobilisation as arenas to operate in.

## 8. Bridging the gap with law: Karsan Rathod

Karsan Rathod

- As told to Aadal Arsi

Education: B.A., LL.B.

Address: Juna Vankar Vaas, Rajula, Amreli 365560

Mobile: 9426484191,

Email: rathodrajula@gmail.com

Since childhood he has seen the poor being exploited and rarely did anyone raise a voice. This irked him and very early in life, he decided to help them out. Though clueless, he went about his work with his dream of changing the lives of the poor tucked into a corner of his heart. "More than 80% of the people living in our region are very poor as they belong to the Scheduled Castes. They lead a life of deprivation and this is what I aspired to change," says Karsanbhai.

Soon after he got his LL.B. degree, he joined the Centre for Social Justice in April 1999. He worked here till 2006. During his seven-year tenure he was involved in a lot of field work. "When I joined them, I knew very little. So, more than my doing much work for CSJ, I got to learn a lot from this organization. Right from how to address a group to how to conduct workshops, Aditiben taught me a lot. Practical learning was immense. We spent days in the field learning how to cull out information

from distressed people, how to feel their agony and how to develop the empathy to address their problems. These are lessons no classroom session can teach."

Having learnt the lessons of law and humanity, Karsanbhai started practising law at CSJ. That's when he came across a case of dalit atrocities. A woman had been raped and murdered by policemen. It was portrayed as a case of suicide. But Karsanbhai was determined to bring out the truth. Though it involved a lot of work, the thought of giving up never occurred to the team. And finally in March 2006, the case was won and all the four accused were brought to book. This and many other similar cases moulded Karsanbhai into the lawyer and person he is today. "I give CSJ credit for all that I have achieved till today. Right from comforts to the peace of mind, I wouldn't have earned any of this without the sound foundation that was laid in the formative years," says Karsanbhai.

Such is the level of sensitivity that he has developed that whatever be the time of day and whatever his frame of mind, if a woman complains of sexual harassment, he does not spare a minute to bring the culprits to book. Once, he approached the District Collector to seek help in getting a police officer dismissed from office as he had sexually exploited a woman. "It is because of all this that advocates trained at CSJ get all the respect, love and admiration from the people. They have inculcated the interest to work and we have learnt that work does not start and end at the advocate's office or Court, but it is a part of our lives to help those in need. Time and place do not matter any longer. In fact, there are no limits to our work, be it a

city or village, a comfortable office or a sweltering hot field, work is on 24x7. Adverse conditions do not deter us, in fact they challenge us," explains Karsanbhai.

His mission in life is to work for all social justice forums and work for the betterment of society. He has cleared his GPSC exams and aspires to work at the highest level where he can make a difference. A voracious reader, books on Gujarati literature and law are his constant mates. Now, he plans to clear his LL.M. exams in Criminology soon and contribute to law schools so that the perspective of students can be moulded to look at law as a profession of service and not money-making.

## 9. The man with a determination of steel: Subedar Kevat

Subedar Kevat  
Education: B.A., LL. B.  
Kanooni Sahay Kendra  
Alkapuri Road, Anjali Provision Store  
Polo Ground, Himatnagar, Sabarkantha.  
Mobile: 9909963407

- As told to Krutika Pillarisett

His composed demeanor, staid countenance, wiry build and reticent body language do not say much about Subedar Kevat. But talk about dalit atrocities or unorganised labour in villages and the 32-year-old advocate's eyes give away his thoughts. The steely determination in those close-set eyes makes it clear that he means business when he talks about delivering justice to the labourers of Idar and nearby villages. His passion for social justice is evident from the sudden lift in his otherwise soft voice.

Hailing from Uttar Pradesh, his parents had moved to Gujarat long before he was born. His father lost his job at a small roadside hotel in Idar after being falsely implicated. He was helpless as he knew nothing about law or the legal system. That is when the youngest in the family Subedar Kevat decided he wanted to study law and fight for his family.

He knew it would not be easy considering his father was the only

earning member of the family. So he took it upon himself and did odd jobs in his village to fund his education. After completing his B.A., LL.B. from the North Gujarat University and successfully getting his hotel back, he was aimless. "I did not know what to specialise in and nor did I know whether I should continue practising law. When I joined the Centre for Social Justice, I was like a lost lamb; I just needed a push in the right direction. The instructors at CSJ did just that and I have not looked back since then," he states.

During his training period at CSJ, he learnt the intricacies of social justice which included labour laws, his favourite subject. An on-field assignment became the turning point in his life and he decided to fight for this cause for the rest of his professional life. "The way the landlords cheated the labourers, most of whom are dalits, irked me and this convinced me to work for the socio-economic emancipation of these most neglected workers in this till-now

unorganised sector. Most of the labourers are illiterate and do not know their rights or the fact that they are being cheated<sup>1</sup>,” he remarks.

Subedar Kevat adds, “Most of these unorganised workers are from the tribal belt of Kotda, Rajasthan and leave their homes for long periods to work in farms in Sabarkantha district. They are not paid the minimum wages and are often not given what they have been promised. Their plight is miserable as they can neither go back home because of a bond signed with the employers nor do they earn what they deserve.”

Formal or organised workers are covered by labour laws that provide social security such as provident fund and pension, gratuity or severance benefit, medical leave and service under the Employees State Insurance Scheme (ESIS), maternity benefit and bonuses. Laws govern working conditions to ensure safety and security in the workplace and the workers come under

the Industrial Relations Act and the Industrial Disputes Act. On the other hand, informal workers are covered only by some scattered labour laws, the benefits of which are low and uncertain. These laws have poor content and coverage and are implemented indifferently by the authorities.

He has gone through testing times and when faced with challenges he turns to the knowledge and values acquired at CSJ. He has fought a hundred such cases in his six years of practice but not a moment has he complained of being tired. When asked where he gets the inspiration from, he says, “It is the smiles of the many labourers I have helped that egg me on.”

His future plans include training young advocates to take up social justice cases and work for dalit and labour rights. He does not want to limit himself to Sabarkantha district and wants to expand his horizons to other parts of the state. His belief being there are many

---

<sup>1</sup>Kevat and his team have successfully worked for the rights of share croppers - starting from a campaign for awareness, identifying violations and responding to them through out-of-court settlements and filing a case whenever needed. They came across two main limitations. The Minimum Wages Act did not cover share croppers and secondly, the office of the Labour Commissioner was very far, making it very difficult for the share croppers to reach there. With their intervention they managed to get a GR stating that the Minimum Wages Act was applicable to share croppers and that the Labour Commissioner will have weekly sittings at Khedbrahma, a place more convenient for share croppers. Thus, they settle about 200 claims annually. This represents the holistic strategy that CSJ adopts. It is a mix of awareness, ensuring whether systems and structures are responsive, law reforms and legal services.



who are suffering because they are ignorant about their rights, Subedar Kevat wants to spread awareness among people so that they know everything about their rights.

On a parting note, he says, “I want to say this to all the law students. They

should do their bit for society before they delve into the material pleasures of their profession, or else their degree is a waste. Take a leaf out of the life of Mahatma Gandhi, who always stood for the truth, he should be your idol in this profession.”

## 10. Giving back to society through law: Mohammad Sindhi

Mohammad Sindhi  
Education: B.A., LL.B.  
Mobile: 9825489156

- As told to Sajitha Joshi

Work has brought Mohammad Sindhi to Junagadh, the land of the Asiatic lions. Here, he has made a mark by working for the underprivileged. He began his tryst with law by drawing inspiration from stalwarts like A. B. Ghasura. Charged with enthusiasm, this native of Palanpur, Banaskantha, completed his B.A., LL.B. and took up practice in 1995. Around the same time, he was introduced to CSJ's centre, Nyay Manch, at Palanpur. He joined the centre as a fellow advocate and worked there till 2002.

During these seven years, he took up many cases for victims of societal atrocities. As a fellow advocate he has undergone several trainings organised by CSJ. Mohammad attributes his fearless nature and attitude to these innumerable training sessions. These trainings helped Mohammad understand the concept of social justice advocacy which have completely changed his perspective of life and its problems. The training basically focussed on introducing the

concept of social justice and its importance, especially in fighting for the rights of the poor and weaker sections of society. He says, "Earlier, I suffered from stage fear and could never speak my mind when needed. Thanks to these trainings, now I can address a large gathering for two hours without a break."

Life has completely changed for Mohammad and he has become a support for so many underprivileged people of society. CSJ has helped Mohammad utilise his potential to represent the cases of people who do not have the capacity to pay. Nevertheless, their cases were very important so he was determined to take them up and ensure justice was done.

Mohammad says that though he was aware of the law and court procedures, social justice was a new area of work for him. Mohammad has extensive experience of legal cases related to land rights, inequality in wages, landlord

atrocities, domestic violence and forest land rights, to name a few.

Now, Mohammad is a public prosecutor and he has been posted in Junagadh since eight years. He spends the whole day attending Court hearings and sessions with his clients. He believes that his spiritual inclination has helped him be humane towards his clients and understand their problems and worries.

Mohammad recollects how his sensitivity helped him tackle a tough situation a few years ago. He was handling the case of a poor tribal man named Majirana. He belonged to the Bhil community and lived in Jethi village where his only livelihood option was his 10-bigha stretch of agricultural land. An ex-army man had acquired government land adjacent to Majirana's. However, his new neighbour blocked the access route to Majirana's land and made life difficult for him assuming that Majirana would give the land to him for free<sup>1</sup>.

That's when the Nyay Manch took up the case and Mohammad gave a tough fight, all the way till High Court. The judgment was finally in favour of

Majirana, whose neighbour was ordered to leave a 20-foot road for Majirana. The case took a lot of time to reach its logical end. Till then, Majirana's wife had to take up daily labour to look after the family. In spite of the malicious intentions of some influential people, including political leaders and police officials, Mohammad could ensure a win for Majirana.

This is just one example of Mohammad's determination and dedication. He says that many a times "lawyers have to withstand pressures and political will to save poor people, who have no one to turn to for justice". But such incidents have never scared or deterred him from helping people in need.

Mohammad is in touch with many social workers and they have had a favourable impact on him. This has made him pro-development and it has instilled a new perspective of development within him. He believes that the training modules developed by CSJ are the best as they drill home the fact that we all belong to society at large. Moreover, his family is a strong foundation of all that's going for him. In

---

<sup>1</sup>This case has laid the foundation for a very extensive tribal land rights campaign in Banaskantha, where several tribal people have been allocated land. We are now involved in monitoring the implementation of FRA.

spite of being a member of a minority community, society has never admonished him. In fact, he is always looked upon by many as a role model<sup>2</sup>.

His message to the younger advocates or law aspirants is that, they should follow their conscience and abide by the law. Mohammad recommends reading books on law and current affairs to excel in life.

He constantly engages with younger advocates to get to know their pulse and views. This helps him to guide them towards a fruitful practice. Mohammed says that “being a public prosecutor gives ample opportunities to give back to society” and pledges to always be a servant, available for public service today, and in the days to come.

---

<sup>2</sup>This demonstrates a significant impact. Including lawyers from the vulnerable communities is a part of our transformative strategy. Quality services and sensitivity attracts people to them, irrespective of the caste, religion and gender boundaries. On the other hand, this exposes the community they come from to venues which would otherwise not be open to them as a ripple effect.

## II. Man with a mission: Piyushbhai Parmar

Piyushbhai Parmar  
Education: B.A., LL.B.

- As told to Lekha Nair

The lesson about a spider, he learnt in Class VI, remained with Piyushbhai Ravjibhai Parmar for life. It was a lesson about determination, hard work and perseverance! This is the inspiration of this lawyer who has fought over 250 cases for the cause of social justice. Piyushbhai applied the never-say-die spirit of the spider, weaving its web successfully after many efforts, to his life.

A resident of Miyagam in Karjan taluka of Vadodara, Piyushbhai's father was a primary school teacher with limited earnings. Lack of electricity at home made Piyush and his siblings walk long distances in search of houses with electricity where they could study. The poor health of his father and the responsibility of managing the family made him quit studies and take up a job. He completed his graduation in Arts and Bachelor of Law while on work.

In the third year of the LL.B. programme, he learnt about the Centre

for Social Justice. His drive to do something for society made him an associate of the organisation in 2002. This stint gave him an orientation of legal rights and field exposure instilled confidence in him. "Mock case presentations done during the training period helped me improve my skills," says Piyush. When he was practicing as a social justice lawyer, Piyush would meet people individually and try to identify their problems. Exorbitant fees charged by lawyers and other repercussions of Court cases prevented people from seeking legal aid. To counter these inhibitions, he conducted group meetings, spread awareness about legal rights and imparted guidance in filing cases.

In 2004, a 16-year-old girl of Hasoth taluka was raped by four men. The culprits belonged to affluent families, so, they tried to suppress the crime. The place where the crime took place was incorrectly recorded by the police. The

case then came under Piyush's charge. Local media support led the police to record the place of crime properly. The local community pressurised the victim's family. There was also a threat to the victim's life. Finally, an out-of-court settlement was agreed upon in which the accused gave a sum of Rs 1.3 lakh to the victim. This defeat only increased Piyush's zeal to fight for human rights.

Piyush also conducts trainings on various rights and legal aid in different places within and outside Gujarat. He has trained first-class Judges of the district magistrate Court in Bharuch on the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 (DVA)<sup>1</sup>. He was the first person to successfully file a case pertaining to the DVA in the district. Talking about the case, Piyush says, "Samsunisha Shahid of Degla village got married to Shahid Sulemaan. Shahid was a divorcee with four children from his first marriage. This fact was hidden from Samsunisha. She was physically and mentally tortured by his ex-wife as she also stayed with Shahid. Tired of the oppression, Samsunisha went over to her parents' place. Here too, her husband often threatened her

over the telephone." Tired of living life in despair, she filed a case of domestic violence with the help of Piyush.

Besides this, Piyush has many cases in his kitty which portray his relentless efforts in striving for justice. He has helped people in Aura village of Vagara taluka to file a case against the sarpanch, talati and post masters who fraudulently took the money of beneficiaries under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). Piyush has been successfully leading a campaign for demanding proper public hearing and environmental impact assessment in the district, whenever a new industry comes in. Piyush believes in living life fearlessly. He doesn't charge any fixed remuneration from his clients. He accepts whatever the client gives sometimes in the form of blessings and at other times as words of appreciation. When he sees his colleagues with lavish homes and cars, he doesn't have any regrets. "They earn cash but what I have earned is beyond comparison. The satisfaction which I get by fighting cases for the poor and needy is my earning. It makes me stand apart from my counterparts. I have fought cases against

---

<sup>1</sup> CSJ lawyers are often the first to introduce a new law or a legal strategy. As a strategy, we focus on implementing existing laws, which in the case of Prevention of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, meant giving bare Acts to judges, holding judicial colloquium, conducting research at par with implementation, filing PIL for proper implementation as well as training of protection officers and police.

senior advocates who have loads of experience and I have won cases against them. They constantly tell me that I am making a difference in my little way.”

The support of his family and his firm belief that nothing is impossible in this world encourages him to continue his good work. Often family members fear for his life but he assures them that he has come to this world with a mission and nothing will stop him from achieving it. “I want to change people’s

perception about lawyers. Our professional ethics also demand that one should help the poor and needy”.

Piyush is otherwise a soft spoken guy but injustice against the poor makes him lose his temper. He dreams of becoming a lawyer who will be known for his work not only in Bharuch but in the entire state. *Fight unremittingly and the world will follow you* is the message given by this young crusader.

## 12. The 'cashless' lawyer of Idar: Rashida Dawood Mansuri

Rashida Mansuri

- As told to Lekha Nair

Education: B.Ed., LL.B.

Address: Kanooni Sahay Kendra

Alkapuri Road, Anjali Provision Store

Polo Ground, Himatnagar, Sabarkantha

Mobile: 9909963407

Rashida had always dreamt of becoming a lawyer but marriage at a young age shattered her hopes. Her family and in-laws wanted her to be a teacher. She completed her Masters in Arts and went on to pursue Bachelor in Education (B.Ed). All this while, she nurtured her dream of becoming a lawyer in the corner of her heart. She completed the LL.B. course without telling anyone. She resigned from her job as a teacher in Banaskantha and joined a private school at Idar.

It was during the summer break in 2000 that she heard about the Centre for Social Justice. This was the place that could translate her dreams into reality. "I wanted to be a lawyer but lacked knowledge and direction." At the seven-day training programme about various legal rights and their usage, she developed a holistic approach. She completed the remaining course in a year and never looked back. Thus, she became the first woman lawyer from

Jamat Nari Samiti Meher of Idar, Sabarkantha.

In 2001, Rashida's sister Zarina filed for divorce on the grounds of physical harassment. Rashida filed a complaint under Section 498 A of the IPC.

According to the community law, Zarina had to stay with her parents during Idat, a period of three months. During that time, she was pressurized by her friends and community to withdraw the complaint.

She considered reconciliation but the Jamat ordered halala in which the woman has to marry another man and get divorce from him before reconciling with the previous husband. In order to reconcile with her previous husband, Zarina agreed for halala and later remarried her ex-husband. That was the first complaint filed under Section 498A in Idar, Sabarkantha. It also marked the beginning of Halaala in the Jammat community.



The two defeats did not deter Rashida, who took it upon herself as a challenge to work with the Jamat for women's rights. She has systematically worked with the Jamat to increase the amount of meher, do away with the practice of halala and activate the Nari Samiti of the Memon jamat.

Till now, 38-year-old Rashida has fought 40-45 cases and many are in the pipeline. These include cases pertaining to criminal laws, dalit rights, labour rights etc. However, she is keen on working for the rights of women of the minority community. "People know about their rights but they refuse to take a stand during crisis.

Adjustment and compromise have become the new mantra of life. Awareness needs to be spread among women and youth to curb injustice and raise their voice against it". The mother of two is doing her bit to implement what she believes. She talks about education of girls, financial security of women and women's rights even during religious festivals and marriage processions. Such is her dedication for the cause.

In 2009, an 11-year-old girl of Angadi village (Kheda) was raped and killed. The body of a 30-year-old man was also found lying in the same premise. This led to the belief that the man had raped

the girl and then committed suicide. And the case was also filed on those lines. However, the real accused was roaming at large. He then filed a complaint against the family members of the girl that they had attacked his house and destroyed his property. The entire family was put behind bars. Rashida took charge of the case and filed a complaint leading to re-investigation.

Today, young girls in and around Idar look up to Rashida as their role model, be it her flamboyant dressing style or her carefree and fearless attitude, they are in awe of her. Her ability to stand all by herself and raise a voice against injustice has instilled confidence in many young women.

She has helped Geeta, a dalit woman to get alimony of Rs 1 lakh from her husband after divorce and encouraged women in Godhra to lodge a complaint against the atrocities perpetrated by policemen. She accepts whatever token amount she gets from her clients. Her counterparts often refer cases of poor people to her. She is often referred to as the 'cashless lawyer' or the 'lawyer of the poor'. Her family is supportive of her activities and takes pride in her deeds.

In 2007, tribals living in Atharsumba village of Vijaynagar taluka sat on a dharna with the support of a local NGO demanding ownership of forest land.

The officers of the forest department open fired at the people and two were killed and five were injured. The police justified the extreme step citing violence by tribals.

The local NGO also withdrew its support and the atmosphere was tense. Rashida convinced the people to lodge a complaint against the police and seek information under the Right to Information Act. She rates it as one of the most challenging cases because she had to struggle with the people, police, local NGO and the victim's families.

Quiz her about the secret behind her success and a smile lights up her face. She narrates an incident about a training programme when a task was assigned to a group of 20 people. The group was told to do some calculation and come up with a final solution. At each stage, the number of people in Rashida's group reduced as their answers didn't match hers. In the end she was left alone with one solution and the rest had some other answers. The correct solution was the one which Rashida come up with. It had taught a lesson that by standing alone the truth doesn't get absolved.

## 13. Crusader of the poor: Sandeep Purani

Sandeep Purani

Education: LL. B.

Address: C/18 Atmiya Tenement Part II,  
Maneja Crossing, Makarpura Road, Vadodara  
Mobile: 9998008531

- As told to Sajitha Joshi

A normal working day keeps Sandeep Purani on his toes from dawn to dusk. However, Sandeep is in no mood to complain. This is reflected when he proudly says that his source of happiness is the opportunity to extend help to the desolate and desperate. During the 11 years of law practice, Sandeep has helped many who were in need of legal aid, poor tribal families, widows, women and children in disadvantageous situations and poor people. Sandeep learnt about CSJ's legal aid centre Adhikar Prapti Kendra in Vadodara.

Since nine years, Sandeep is associated with the centre and is providing his services to people in need of social justice. In 2002, Sandeep got the opportunity to participate at a training organised by CSJ. This training exposed

him to the concept of social justice advocacy. Since then, he has participated in many trainings and he was later promoted as a resource person to train other fellow advocates<sup>1</sup>.

Civil Procedure Codes, Code of Criminal Procedure, Evidence Act and Motor Vehicles Act have been his forte. On any normal day Sandeep takes up close to 4-5 cases. Reckoning his days as tenderfoot, Sandeep shared details of a case which taught him many values in life. The case in reference was that of a Muslim widow in Vadodara who had to fight against her in-laws. Sandeep fought the case under the Indian Divorce Act 1869. It was a remarkable achievement as none of the members of the law fraternity had ever fought a case like this<sup>2</sup>. The woman got Rs. 4.5 lakh

---

<sup>1</sup> Sandeep represents the category of lawyers who were trained initially by CSJ and who set up a private practice and are not on the pay rolls of CSJ, but contribute their time for CSJ as well as for the cause of human rights.

<sup>2</sup> Introducing new laws and legal strategies is one of the key contributions of CSJ to the field of legal practice.

dowry that her parents had given and a maintenance amount (alimony). This win made a significant change in Sandeep's life. He was washed over by the feeling of having helped someone in need, and all this was done without charging a dime from the woman.

Since then Sandeep has fought many cases related to land holdings, encroachment and dowry. He is a regular visitor at the Central Jail and releases under-trial prisoners on bail or personal bond. He sees the CSJ<sup>3</sup> intervention as a unique thing which is much needed for the betterment of society. Poor and disadvantaged sections of society get a platform of their own to fight for rights.

Since childhood Sandeep cherished the dream of becoming an advocate and today he is a content man as he has realised his childhood dream by completing his LL.B. Though he is a busy man, his hectic schedule has never deterred him from spending quality time with his family. A doting father to his two children, Sandeep says “family is my strength” and the biggest support during all trying times. Apart from his private practice he is also the legal advisor of five cooperative societies. This gives him

ample opportunities to be in touch with various aspects of legal aid.

Prior to becoming an advocate, Sandeep used to work as a clerk at a lawyer's office. This helped him study and understand laws and their intricacies. He is a keen observer, which helps him learn from other advocates too. He also keeps a track of all the happenings around him and follows legal cases through newspapers and television. He also believes in the power of mass media and thinks that it should be effectively used by lawyers in cases pertaining to social justice.

He considers CSJ as the pioneer in the arena of social justice and says that the new fellow advocates should always weigh this option of becoming a social advocate rather than just opting for tempting options. Sandeep says, “There are many out there who need our support, care and aid; so we should be vigilant enough to know such instances and offer help.”

The struggles and hurdles in the profession are only stepping stones. In fact “this is a process that whets the appetite of an apt advocate”. He

---

<sup>3</sup> CSJ has worked extensively in the arena of prisoners' rights. It has run a 'Kayda Sahayak' programme with NHRC where life convicts are trained as paralegals and they work for the rights of under trials.

completely agrees with the motto of CSJ and extends his time and expertise in solving many legal hassles of the poor. He feels that his efforts have paid off and his appreciation comes in the form of people's love and the pride of seeing the Vadodara legal aid centre being judged as the best legal aid centre by CSJ more

than twice. This gives immense moral support to the advocates associated with the centre. Even post-retirement he plans to be associated with CSJ to promote and guide young advocates. He is sure that his experience as a social justice advocate would help in providing the right direction to young advocates.

## 14. Ensuring a life of dignity for all: Udayan Trivedi

Udayan Trivedi

Education: LL.M.

Address: Block no 1, Tapovan Park Society,  
Chittal Road, Opp. Airport, Amreli

Mobile: 9426210529

Email: udayandtrivedi@yahoo.co.in

- As told to Aadal Arsi

Udayan is a lawyer with a golden heart. While other lawyers cry their throats hoarse in the courtroom asking the Judge to pronounce the 'hanged unto death' verdict for criminals, Udayan thinks differently. He believes that everyone has a right to lead a dignified life. "This understanding is a result of my association with the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ). After completing my LL.M., I attended trainings at CSJ in 1999-2000. That's when the movement for prisoners was launched. I spent three years working in four jails of Rajkot. Here, I interacted with convicts and realised that many are victims of circumstances. That's when I decided to work for them," says Udayan.

Recalling a case in which he managed to save a life<sup>1</sup>, he says, "A convict was sentenced to death. He had killed a woman. And CSJ's policy prohibited one to work for those who perpetrated

cruelty against women. But when I met this man I felt that he was repenting and deserved a second chance in life. He had challenged the verdict at all the Courts for which he ended up spending all his savings and selling his house too. In the fight for survival, he had already reached the High Court, but things seemed quite bleak for him. That's when I intervened and senior advocate S. Murlidhara (now a judge at Delhi High Court) was engaged for this case. We managed to get a stay just two days before he was to be hanged. We worked day and night to get him justice. Finally, the Court changed the verdict to life imprisonment. All this was possible because I was with CSJ. This is the kind of freedom and support we get. If we are committed, the world comes around to support us."

Udayan says that such challenges have changed his life. He has learnt to take on tough challenges. And he has acquired

<sup>1</sup> This case is significant because it shows the shift in the reach of a taluka lawyer. Usually, a taluka-level lawyer operates within his/her boundary, hesitating even to approach the District or High Court. Being able to go up to the Supreme Court is a significant paradigm shift.

the art of management by dealing with such situations. “After dealing with 50 cases simultaneously, I know the worth of time. I liken this to managing a huge family where everyone's needs are equally important. We cannot compromise one for the other as each child (read client) is equally precious,” he says. All this has earned him the love of not just his family but even his clients, whose needs he addresses with great care and passion, look up in reverence to him.

Recollecting the trainings he has attended at CSJ, he says, “Be it the human rights seminar at Panchgini, trainings related to human rights or the workshops we attended to enhance our skills to address issues related to the earthquake affected, each one has been a gem in its own right.” And all this has lent a new dimension to his life. So much so that he places the client's interests before his. “Fighting cases for the poorest of the poor is not a one-off case. It is a daily practice to reach out to those who need my help the most and cannot access similar help from elsewhere.” That's why women who are fighting for their rights top his list. He once got maintenance of Rs 8,000 per month for a woman who did not have any other source of income<sup>2</sup>. She was very grateful to him, but he gives credit

to CSJ. “While working at CSJ, I learnt a lot about the psychology of Judges and even today that is how I go about my work. Firstly, I understand my client, those involved in the case and then the Judge. It is a profession linked with lives. Our efforts can ensure that we help someone else lead a good life and that is the reward that matters,” says Udayan, who has been felicitated by the Rajkot jail for his work against human rights violation.

Ask him to state the difference between a professional lawyer and the one trained at CSJ and he says, “Morality cannot be compared. What we have learnt comes from the grassroots and what professionals know is from classroom sessions and law books. One leads to the mind and the other to the heart. For us clients are people first and litigants later and that's what lies at the core of our profession. The one who understands this is a true lawyer who will work for the people and their rights.” For all this, he draws a lot of inspiration from Kiran Bedi's series of books on law and order. His advice to the upcoming lawyer fraternity is, “If you can make a difference even in the life of one needy person, it is a life well lived. And our profession gives us the opportunity to serve many”.

---

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that at the time this was done, the standard practice of courts was to award approximately Rs 1,000, irrespective of the income of the husband.

## 15. Professionalism with a human touch: Altaf Ghasura

Altaf Ghasura

- As told to Charkha

Education: B.Com., LL.B.

Address: 'Shukun', Mohammadi Society,  
Sukhbag Road, Palanpur, Dist. Banaskantha  
Mobile: 9825191790

Altaf Ghasura has inherited the aptitude of practising law from his father Bajidkhan Ghasura, who practised law in Palanpur in Banaskantha district. He has taken the streak of legal knowledge to another level by employing his services for the development of the oppressed.

“My father's practice inspired me to make a career in law and judiciary. After completing my graduation in Commerce, I studied LL.B. I started my practice as a junior lawyer when I learnt about the fellowship training programme being offered by CSJ. I knew that CSJ extends legal aid to socially vulnerable communities like women, tribals, dalits and those who have been oppressed,” says Ghasura recalling his first encounter with CSJ.

Ghasura was selected for CSJ's two-year fellowship programme in 1995. During that phase, he underwent extensive

training on a variety of laws related to subjects like domestic violence, women exploitation, dalit atrocities, and infringement of tribal rights etc.

Ghasura says, “During my fellowship years, I realised that our training was the institute's way of demonstrating its will to help people who couldn't afford to fight their legal cases by hiring private lawyers. I received training from different subject experts. They shared information about the latest judgments on these subjects. We learnt about atrocities against women, dalits, and children. We used to visit villages, meet social workers and common people to spread awareness about their legal rights.”

Every district has its own local problems and Banaskantha has issues like land rights of tribal and dalit communities, maintenance for women in cases of domestic violence, etc. These trainings helped Ghasura develop the attitude of



solving cases, not necessarily in Court. He worked to sensitize people, organise meetings with the concerned authorities and also encourage out-of-court settlements. While dealing in such cases, Ghasura still acknowledges his fellowship training at CSJ.

He says, “The knowledge and training I received during my fellowship years, help me in my profession even now. After the fellowship, in spite of being a junior lawyer, I could effectively stand up for my cases and argue in Court. Though I used to work for clients, I always tried to be a mediator between my client and opponent to solve the case. In a couple of land-related issues, I spoke to the state revenue department during people's representations.”

Ghasura has his private practice but he is always ready to take up cases related to social and community issues. He credits CSJ's training for developing this different perspective in him. He says, “For any professional lawyer, whoever approaches him is just a client, but after the CSJ training I started understanding the mental stress they undergo. I don't look at them just as my clients but also as human beings. I talk to them in a sympathetic manner and try to give them moral support. I try to be more than a lawyer and help them as a human being. This makes

them feel better and relaxed and their hope of getting justice is strengthened.”

Joining the fellowship programme offered by the CSJ lent the sheen of human facet to Altaf Ghasura's professional skills. After having practised for various social causes over the years, Ghasura feels that there are many challenges in the legal battles waged for oppressed communities. Sharing the extract of his experience of socio-legal practice, he says, “Actually, our social structure needs to evolve a lot more. We have a very complex social structure and this leads to atrocities and injustice against women, children, dalits and tribals. It is a big challenge to stand up against it. It is equally difficult to make people aware about them.

Especially in case of women, they have to live with their people, their family. I personally don't believe that they get justice from the Courts alone. If a woman files a case against her husband and I ensure that the husband gets punishment from Court, that is not social justice for the woman. She is concerned about herself and her children's well-being in society. In my opinion, we don't have a solution for such situations.”

He further says, “If the Court orders the husband to pay maintenance to his

wife after separation and if he does not follow the order, there are provisions that the husband will be sent to jail. But by doing this, the woman's problems will not be solved. The government doesn't give her money to raise her children. She has to rely on

her family or the community. Our laws don't have a remedy for such social issues. People believe in the fact that after fighting Court cases for 8-10 years only time is wasted. And this mind set has to be changed so that women are equipped to find workable solutions.”

## 16. Social Justice Lawyering: An Emerging Concept

-Nupur

### Introduction

Judicial activism has been in vogue for quite some time now. In the initial years, when the process began, it was basically at the behest of some sensitive lawyers and judges that the judiciary started playing a proactive role in helping people access their rights. For quite some time, it was restricted to public interest at the High Court and the Supreme Court. In the past five to seven years, there has been much more work happening in this area. It has now become a lucrative career for many. With more and more actors getting involved, today the concept has acquired a much broader meaning.

No single exhaustive definition of the concept is possible as it keeps acquiring a different dimension based on context and experience. However, the following words of Professor Kalin very beautifully explain what is meant by social justice lawyering:

*"Social justice lawyering is necessarily an activist lawyering which transforms the power relations and thus facilitates the assertion of rights and entitlements of the poor through legal processes. The traditional legal aid is directed towards the protection of individuals in specific cases. It is intended to defend the poor but no effort is made to encourage the formulation and effective enforcement for the laws for the poor. In contrast, social justice lawyering goes much beyond the traditional legal assistance and looks towards becoming an effective resource in the empowerment of the impoverished. It focuses on social transformation through use of law."*

### Characteristics of Social Justice Lawyering:

The following could be identified as the key characteristics of social justice lawyering:

1. **It is Not Charity Based:** Social justice lawyering is not restricted to handling a few cases free of cost. It has its foundation in the rights perspective. It helps the person claim her right with dignity and in the process strengthens and empowers her.

2. **It Looks at The Linkage Between Law and its Impact on Society:** While traditional lawyering is only concerned about winning a given case and getting the maximum benefit for the client, social justice lawyering involves close scrutiny of the impact a particular action will have on the society as a whole.
3. **It Allows Equal Spaces to Lawyers and others Activists:** Law is mystified and held in awe by most people. Traditional lawyering strives to maintain the status quo and adds to the mystique. A traditional lawyer derives his power out of the fear people have of law. He tries and maintains a distance from the rest of the fraternity and operates in a very compartmentalized frame work. Social justice lawyering is about demystifying law. It is about interacting with different fields and deriving a more holistic understanding of law in context. It does not have a superiority tag attached to it. Rather, it derives its strength from a multi-disciplinary approach with different people contributing their expertise in different fields. It is a process which leads to "lawyerization" of non lawyers and "non lawyerization" of lawyers.
4. **It is Not Restricted to Court Room Lawyering:** Social justice lawyering uses different arena with the key objective being change in society and in the process uses law as a tool. It is involved in bringing about legal awareness in the masses as well as law implementing mechanisms. It uses media to build public opinion on an issue. It contributes to law reform processes. It closely interacts with the legislature on new laws being introduced. It strategically uses non court forums like the NHRC.
5. **It is Inclusive in Nature:** Social justice lawyering does not operate in isolation. It constantly strives to involve various stake holders like the law colleges, the Bar, voluntary organizations etc. in the process. It has a symbiotic relation with the other stake holders specially the main stream issue based movements. It contributes to the main stream issue based movements by providing a legal perspective and in turn derives its strength out of it.
6. **It is not Restricted to High Court and Supreme Court:** Even in terms of using the court, social justice lawyering uses the lower judiciary as much as the High Court and Supreme Court. It is not restricted to filing of Public Interest Litigations.
7. **Does Not Get Caught in "Win Lose" Frame Work:** Social Justice Lawyering does not believe in taking up only those cases where it is possible to get a favourable order. It also looks at strategic relevance of losing a case to get a greater impact.