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after GLC

After GLC is a section of the magazine which sees ex-students of Government Law College, who have managed to carve a niche for themselves in the ultimate field of their choice, be it law or otherwise, writing briefly about their experiences in the world outside of GLC and their journey after graduating from GLC to their current positions. This section often proves to be a source of inspiration for the students of the institution who aspire to the same level of achievement and a source of pride for the faculty and administration of the College.

This year, the Section documents the journeys of two members of GLC's alumni, each of whom graduated from the College, but then proceeded to pursue careers in completely different fields. Karishma Parekh was an undergraduate student at the London School of Economics and did her law in GLC after graduation. Her journey after law made its way back to London, where, not only did she pass her Bar exam with flourishing colours but was also awarded pupillage in one England's magic set of chambers, the Fountain Court. Karishma then went on to secure a permanent place at a leading set of barrister's chambers called 4-5 Gray's Inn Square. Karishma relates her experiences in all these prestigious offices in India and abroad. Raunak Kapoor passed out GLC and then went on to pursue a career in a completely different field. After hosting shows for the All India Radio, he now presents cricket for ESPNcricinfo.com, following and talking to the biggest cricket maestros. An active part of the Moot Court Association of GLC, Raunak regards the College to be instrumental in his success. In a matter of just two years, Raunak with his incredible talent has reached places one only dreams of. With his usual zest, he explains to readers the bitter-sweet experiences of college life. In this Section, Karishma and Raunak relate their courses to where they are today and explain how GLC formed the cornerstone of their success.



Find Purpose, The Means Will Follow



Karishma Parekh

There is no better way to tell a story other than starting at the beginning and ending at the end. So here is my 'Life after GLC', as I have been flatteringly asked to narrate by the Magazine Committee this year. In 2001, while reading a degree in Management Sciences at the London School of Economics (LSE), I had my first stint in law when I took a class in Commercial Law taught by Professor Hugh Collins (now the Vinerian Professor of English Law at Oxford). I fell in love—with the class, the professor and the law! Nearing my LSE graduation, I applied to Cambridge University for a second degree in law, to find out just in time that it would not be recognised in India as my first degree was not an Indian degree. As I was certain that I wanted to practice in India (little

did I realise that destiny would bring me back to London), I gave Cambridge up and risked arriving in Mumbai, two months after the law colleges had started. Upon landing, I went straight to GLC and spent the next week attempting to convince the administrative body that despite all the odds (my final marks had not been released, I did not have a migration certificate and classes had started two months prior), I was a good student to take a chance on. I am so glad they did and sincerely hope they feel the same!

When I had walked towards GLC to attend my first lecture, I recall looking up at the building and wondering what a contrasting difference in infrastructure it was going to be. Just the library block at LSE was larger than the entire GLC campus! However, that was the first and last time a negative thought crossed my mind. GLC had so much to offer: its prestigious name, some fabulous teachers who were respected practitioners, the moot culture, famous alumni, intellectually stimulating peers, the opportunity to polish one's advocacy skills and lastly, its proximity to the legal district in Mumbai. Nothing beats experience; and the academic schedule from 7-10 am, attended or otherwise, gives GLC students the opportunity to work simultaneously while pursuing our degree—an unmatched advantage!

It was this and the GLC internship programme that got me into Senior Counsel Mr. Janak Dwarkadas' chambers. On my first day, I was completely overwhelmed by the profile of the team introduced to me, who were alumni of Oxford, Cambridge and

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LSE graduation - July 2003

Georgetown Universities and I had a delightful feeling that after all, my decision to return home wasn't bad at all!

This followed with an articleship at Wadia Ghandy & Co. where I learned a very crucial lesson of never saying no. The clerks soon realised that I would go to court at the drop of a hat and my seniors encouraged me to appear at all forums—big and small. By the time I had completed my articles, besides having graduated from GLC, I had appeared before the High Court, the Division Bench, the Debt Recovery Tribunal, the Prothonotary and the Court Receiver. I prepared for my appearances before the Court Receiver just as I did before the High Court. Entering this world was a high and I felt like flying when I had stood my ground before the judge and the other side. I knew that I was prepared to take on the world with this wealth of advocacy experience.

I then joined Mr. Zal Andhyarujina's chambers as his first junior and there was no better place where I would have rather been. I got excited at every brief, big or small, and could see my whole life pass by in that happy chamber. Life, on the other hand, had something else in store. I got married and then relocated to London. My husband and I had a pact that I would return to my practice at the Bombay High Court within a year. Four and a half years have passed since and we are still in London.

London was amid bad state. It was at the peak of the recession and I had to start from scratch just as I had done in Mumbai. I had to distinguish reputed lawyers from not so good ones, learn the etiquette, understand how a litigation CV should be presented, find out how to re-qualify as a barrister and most importantly, break into the Commercial Bar, my ultimate dream, which, according to popular perception, was unachievable.



With my then partner at Wadia Ghandy, Djena Sunavala, and our team - 2005

It took me over a year just to find out how to re-qualify as a barrister, and another or so to take the Bar exams which included oral advocacy exams, where professional actors were presented as witnesses whom we had to cross examine in a mock trial. Incisive questions rode us through mental roller coasters, one of which asked in the Professional Ethics paper was—'Which of the two would be more likely to be disbarred: a barrister who had committed murder or one who had travelled without a ticket on a local train.' The answer, astonishingly, was the latter, as a barrister of England and Wales must not be dishonest.

The thrill of passing the exams and invitation for the formal certificate presentation ceremony was short-lived when we were told that it was necessary to complete pupillage (an excruciating 12 month training under a practicing barrister) and obtain a Pupillage Certificate before we could actually practice. To add insult to the injury, the Under Treasurer at the Ceremony in his speech while congratulating us successful graduates also warned us to keep an open mind as a majority of us would have to think of other careers as we wouldn't ever be able to get pupillage.



On a trip to Prague with the LSE International Relations Society



Disheartening, to say the least! I kept trying, nevertheless and was successful (and very lucky, indeed) at being awarded pupillage by Fountain Court, one of England's magic circle sets of chambers. Here, I learned that a major source of commercial work in England included two areas of practice that did not much exist at the Bombay High Court—professional negligence and insurance. I was fascinated to learn how a commercial law barrister could have an entirely black letter law practice, i.e. draft pleadings and provide opinions rather than appear in Court. A successful commercial law barrister could go to Court once in perhaps 2-3 months.

I say this not as a criticism of the English or Indian system, but to explain the vast difference between them. Although the application of the law is similar in both the jurisdictions, the procedure and the time one has to prepare for each matter is greatly dissimilar. In India, the system is inclusive which is quite advantageous. Anyone who has completed their LLB (and now passed the Bar exams) can become a counsel and if he or she is good, no matter what their background, they would get repeat briefs from satisfied attorneys. There is enough work to go around and the last minute nature of the system in India makes counsels think faster on their feet than their English counterparts. Indeed, I quite miss the drama of the typical Indian courtroom.

Having jumped through all the hoops, I finally gained 'tenancy' at a leading set of chambers called 4-5 Gray's Inn Square. I was fortunate to be at this fabulous set where one of my Head of Chambers won the 'Chambers and Partners Silk of the Year' award not so long ago and the other, Mr. Robert Griffiths QC, is a committee member of the Marylebone Cricket Club, at Lord's.

With very few advocacy opportunities in a purely commercial practice, I was advised to take up a six month immigration law project to polish my cross examination skills. Although I had tremendous advocacy experience from India, it was primarily interim application of experience. To convince me to

take up immigration work, my clerks, through whom we get work in England, assured me that I would be able work on my commercial practice simultaneously and that we would not need to chase fees as it was work from the government.

For the project, I had to appear on behalf of the British Government at First Tier Tribunals and oppose appeals from visa rejections. They could be family visit visas, work permit visas, European Union spousal applications or even asylum applications.

A few months earlier, I was so focussed on my Commercial practice that I would not have touched immigration law with a barge pole. (Although I must admit I have thoroughly enjoyed the cross examination experience). Similarly, if someone would have told me when I left LSE for Mumbai in 2003 that I would return to London in 2009, I would not have paid much heed to their prediction. When I was a junior

counsel at the Bombay High Court, if someone would have indicated that I would become a barrister in London, teach Commercial Law at the LSE and get elected to the Gray's Inn Barristers' Committee, I would have laughed. I had not dreamt about holding my ground at the Bombay High Court or the Royal Courts of Justice as a child. But this is all that happened to me and I now love what I do. I guess life is what happens when one is busy planning something else and one must learn to embrace it anyway.

I pursued my passion for advocacy and persevered in my goal, regardless of what others said. I kept at it until I broke into the Commercial Bar in Mumbai and in London. Both were difficult but I have come to believe that everything is possible if the story begins at GLC. For me, it all began when I was successful in gaining an internship in Mr. Dwarkadas' chambers. One thing then led to another and I did not say no to what came my way.

If you enjoy what you do, you will find purpose. The means will follow.



At 4-5 Gray's Inn Square