

Review Paper on Influential Female Lawyers From Various Regions of India with Reference to their Landmark Cases

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Abstract: *Women in India have achieved significant advancements in the legal profession, successfully overcoming gender obstacles to attain the highest positions in their industry. This article focuses on the 10 notable and significant female lawyers who are presently engaged in legal practice inside the nation. Their achievements exemplify the ability of women to excel in the legal setting and effectively compete with their male counterparts. The remarkable accomplishments of these pioneering legal figures serve as a source of motivation for any ambitious young women contemplating a profession in law. Despite the persistent obstacles encountered by women within the predominantly male Indian legal system, the notable achievements of these remarkable lawyers serve as evidence that barriers to advancement can be overcome. Their narratives warrant retelling in order to inspire forthcoming cohorts of women to strive for greatness and actualize their capabilities.*

This paper focuses on the influential female lawyers from various regions of India who have made significant contributions to enhancing the country's judicial system. They defied obstacles and disregarded the assertion that women were ineligible for a career in law.

Keywords: Legal profession, career in law, influential women lawyers, challenges, legal practitioners

I. INTRODUCTION

Following is the compilation of influential and inspiring women lawyers from various regions of India who have significantly contributed to enhancing the nation's legal system. They defied obstacles and disregarded the assertion that women were ineligible for a career in law.

Indira Jaising

Indira Jaising was born in Bombay, India, on June 3, 1940. She was raised in an era when only a small number of women chose to pursue professions in law. However, Indira shown a strong resolve to overcome gender restrictions. Following her graduation from the University of Bombay in 1962, which is now known as the University of Mumbai, she commenced her legal profession by working under renowned legal practitioners such as Ram Jethmalani. Indira shown a fervent dedication to employing legal means in her pursuit of justice. Her initial encounters influenced her to emerge as one of India's most esteemed human rights attorneys. Indira persevered in her pursuit of success in the predominantly male legal field, despite facing numerous challenges.

Professional Background:

In 1966, she commenced her professional journey as a junior to a prominent lawyer such as Ram Jethmalani.

In 2009, she achieved the distinction of being the inaugural female elected as the Additional Solicitor General of India.

In 1981, she co-founded the Lawyers Collective with her husband with the aim of offering legal assistance.

Prominent Legal Cases:

Indira Jaising played a crucial role in the legal dispute that resulted in the significant ruling in the Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997) case. In response to a petition brought by women's rights groups, the Supreme Court of India established rules aimed at preventing and addressing instances of sexual harassment against women within the

workplace. The Vishaka rules, also referred to as the rules, establish the fundamental principles for tackling workplace sexual harassment in India.

The legal case of Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018) In India, Indira Jaising played a pivotal role in advocating for the legal decriminalization of homosexuality. In the present case, the Supreme Court rendered a decision to invalidate Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which rendered consensual homosexual conduct as criminal offenses. The ruling represented a significant milestone in acknowledging and safeguarding the rights of the LGBTQ+ community within the Indian context.

Indira Jaising played a role in the case of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) v. Union of India (2014), which led to a significant ruling by the Supreme Court acknowledging transgender individuals as the third gender. The court validated the rights of transgender individuals and mandated the government to implement a range of affirmative measures aimed at safeguarding their well-being and promoting their integration within society.

Pinky Anand

Pinky Anand was born in 1959 in Delhi, situated in India. Since her early years, she was resolute in her aspiration to pursue a profession as a lawyer. Following her graduation from Delhi University in 1982, Pinky commenced her professional career under the eminent legal practitioner Soli Sorabjee. Pinky encountered difficulties in achieving success inside the predominantly male legal field due to her gender. However, she remained undeterred by gender hurdles in her pursuit of her aspirations. Her self-assurance and diligent approach enabled her to establish herself as one of India's most esteemed female attorneys. Pinky's early tenacity molded her into the proficient attorney she is presently.

Professional Background:

Commenced professional training under Soli Sorabjee in 1982.

In 2014, she assumed the position of Additional Solicitor General of India.

In 2007, the individual was designated as a Senior Advocate by the Delhi High Court.

Prominent Legal Cases:

Citizens for Green Doon effectively advocated for the Union of India in a legal dispute about the Chardham project, which entailed the development of a 900 km all-weather road meant to connect four Hindu sites.

The South Indian actress Khushboo is entitled to constitutional rights of freedom and expression. In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court affirmed the rights of individuals and additionally invalidated 21 instances of defamation.

Karuna Nundy

The birth of Karuna Nundy took place in 1974 in New Delhi, India. Since her early years, she has a clear aspiration to pursue a career in law and champion the cause of human rights. Following his completion of legal studies at Cambridge University, Karuna commenced his professional career at the Supreme Court of India in 1998. Being a young female lawyer, she encountered obstacles in a profession that was predominantly male. Nonetheless, Karuna was resolute in her intention to employ the law as a means to effect social transformation. Her empathy and unwavering commitment to fairness motivated her to pursue matters of public significance. Karuna's formative experiences had a pivotal role in her development as a prominent legal advocate for constitutional rights and liberties in India.

Professional Background:

Commenced legal proceedings at the Supreme Court in the year 1998.

My area of expertise lies in the field of constitutional law and human rights, with a particular focus on Public Interest Litigation (PIL).

The individual consistently offers pro bono legal services.

Prominent Legal Cases:

Ms. Nundy makes contributions to the 2013 'Anti-Rape Laws' and the Right to Food Act as part of her legal practice. Additionally, it encompassed advocating for the rights of the individuals affected by the Bhopal gas leak incident. Nundy was engaged in consultation during the formulation of the Verma Committee Report, which was established by the government with the purpose of evaluating India's Anti-Rape Legislation. Despite its initial lack of success, the Report served as a forerunner to the subsequent efforts that led to the enactment of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, sometimes referred to as "The anti-rape bill."

Meneka Guruswamy

The birth of Meneka Guruswamy took place in 1971 in New Delhi, India. Since her early years, she had a strong motivation to advocate for the principles of human rights and social justice. Meneka commenced his legal career in India's Supreme Court in 1996, following his graduation from Bangalore's National Law School in 1993. The individual encountered gender bias within the legal profession due to her gender as a lawyer. However, Meneka demonstrated resilience and successfully positioned herself as a prominent constitutional lawyer. Due to her exceptional empathy and astute legal acumen, she emerged as an unparalleled proponent of civil freedoms. Menaka's initial resolve to utilize the law as a tool for safeguarding human rights laid the foundation for her renowned career advocating for liberty and egalitarianism.

Professional Background:

Initiated professional engagement at the Supreme Court in 1996.
Demonstrates expertise in the fields of constitutional law and human rights law.
I am an instructor of law at West Bengal National University.

Prominent Legal Cases:

In the year 2018, Guruswamy provided legal representation to the petitioners involved in the significant Section 377 case at the Supreme Court. This case witnessed a unanimous decision by a five-judge constitution bench to legalize homosexuality.

Vrinda Grover

Since her early years, she was profoundly unsettled by acts of injustice and inequity. Following her completion of a law degree at Delhi University in 1982, Vrinda commenced her professional journey as a human rights attorney in 1987. Being a woman, she had obstacles when attempting to enter the predominantly male legal field. However, Vrinda exhibited resolute dedication in her desire to employ legal measures in safeguarding the marginalized. Her compassion and unwavering support established the initial groundwork for her renowned profession as one of India's leading human rights attorneys. Vrinda's formative circumstances served as a catalyst for her enduring pursuit of justice.

Professional Background:

Commenced professional career as a human rights attorney in 1987.
The Multiple Action Research Group was established in 1990 as a human rights group.
In 2011, the individual was designated as a member of the Upper House of Parliament.

Prominent Legal Cases:

Grover has provided legal representation for individuals affected by significant incidents, including the Soni Sori rape-torture case, the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, the 1987 Hashimpura police killings, the 2004 Ishrat Jahan case, and the 2008 anti-Christian riots in Kandhamal.

She had a significant role in the development of the 2013 Criminal Law Amendment, which aimed to address sexual assault. Additionally, she contributed to the creation of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act in 2012 and the Prevention of Torture Bill in 2010. These bills were designed to provide protection against Communal and Targeted Violence.

Rebecca John

Rebecca John's birth took place in Kerala, India in the year 1958. Since an early stage in her life, she possessed a strong enthusiasm for social justice. Rebecca commenced her criminal legal practice in 1983 after completing her law degree at Delhi University in 1980. Being a female lawyer, she encountered gender bias in the predominantly male-dominated field. However, Rebecca persisted, motivated by her unwavering principles and aspiration to safeguard essential rights. She expeditiously solidified her reputation as a lawyer driven by ethical principles, assuming contentious legal matters. Rebecca's initial resolve to safeguard civil freedoms established the groundwork for her extensive tenure as a well regarded proponent of human rights.

Professional Background:

Commenced legal proceedings before the Delhi High Court in 1983.
Renowned for proficiency in criminal law and the protection of inmates' rights.
Participated in multiple law reform committees.

Prominent Legal Cases:

She acted as the legal representative for the juvenile who was found guilty in the gang rape case on December 16, 2017. The court confirmed his guilt, however, the sentence was shortened from 3 years to around 2 months that had already been served.
The individual in question has been involved in prominent legal proceedings, including the Hawala scam case of 1996, the Anti-Sikh riots case of 1984, and the Hashimpura Massacre case of 1986.

Zia Mody

Zia Mody's birthplace is Mumbai, India, on the year 1956. Since her early years, she had a strong desire to become a prosperous attorney. Upon completing her legal studies at Cambridge University in 1978, Zia subsequently returned to India with a resolute determination to establish a prominent presence within the legal domain. Being a woman, she faced gender bias while working in a profession that was predominantly male. But Zia persisted and ascended to the pinnacle through diligent effort and unwavering commitment. In 2004, she was a co-founder of the law firm AZB & Partners. Zia's initial aspirations and unwavering determination laid the foundation for her distinguished profession as one of India's most renowned corporate advocates.

Professional Background:

The law firm AZB & Partners was co-founded in 2004.
Holds positions on the boards of multiple prominent corporations.
Regarded as one of India's most influential female entrepreneurs.

Prominent Legal Cases:

In the year 2018, she provided legal support to Chanda Kochhar, the CEO of ICICI Bank, during an inquiry panel that was examining allegations of quid-pro-quo in relation to a loan provided to the Videocon group. Kohlhar tendered his resignation in October 2018.
In 2022, Mody acted as the legal representative for Hindenburg Research, a US short seller, in a legal dispute with Adani Group. The dispute revolved around accusations of stock manipulation and accounting fraud against Adani.

Sudha Bharadwaj

In 1961, Sudha Bharadwaj was born in Massachusetts, United States of America. Since an early stage in her life, she was motivated to combat instances of injustice and inequity. Following the completion of her law degree in Bangalore in 2000, Sudha commenced her legal profession in Chhattisgarh in 2002. She encountered obstacles as a female attorney and advocate in a field predominantly occupied by men. However, Sudha remained resolute in her endeavor to utilize legal means in order to empower marginalized individuals. She played a key role in the establishment of a labor

organization and offered legal assistance to workers, farmers, and minority groups. Subsequent to her formative experiences, Sudha developed a strong commitment to advocating for human rights in the region of Chhattisgarh.

Professional Background:

In 2002, I commenced my legal profession in the state of Chhattisgarh. Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha workers' union was established. Apprehended in 2018 based on accusations of affiliations with Maoists.

Other:

Sudha Bharadwaj has been incarcerated for nearly three years in the Bhima Koregaon case, which is widely known. Out of the total of 16 individuals who were apprehended in relation to human rights, 13 were incarcerated, while only Bharadwaj and Varavara Rao were granted bail.

Flavia Agnes

Flavia Agnes was born in Mumbai, India in 1953. Since her early years, she was deeply affected by the inequities experienced by women in society. Following the completion of her law degree in 1974, Flavia began actively promoting women's rights and lobbying for legal reforms. Being a female lawyer, she faced opposition in a profession that is predominantly male. However, Flavia persisted, resolute in her intention to utilize the law as a tool to elevate women. In the 1990s, she established the group Majlis with the purpose of offering legal assistance to suppressed women. Flavia's initial encounters as a champion for women's rights influenced her ongoing struggle for gender equality.

Professional Background:

The group Majlis was established in 1990 with the objective of offering legal assistance to women. An innovator in legal reforms aimed at safeguarding women's rights. In 2005, the individual was appointed to the Sachar Committee.

Prominent Legal Cases:

In the aftermath of the Shah Bano case in 1985, Flavia Agnes actively opposed the regressive amendments made to the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act of 1986. The case brought forward concerns pertaining to the provision of financial support for divorced Muslim women.

Meenakshi Lekhi

The birth of Meenakshi Lekhi took place in 1968 in New Delhi, India. Since her early years, she had a strong desire to become a lawyer and advocate for justice. Following her completion of a law degree at Delhi University in 1990, Meenakshi commenced her professional career in the Supreme Court. Being a young female lawyer, she encountered obstacles in a profession that was predominantly male. However, Meenakshi exerted considerable effort to demonstrate her abilities and dedication to safeguarding rights. She represented individuals affected by calamities such as the 1984 riots. Meenakshi's unwavering resolve to overcome challenges at an early stage laid the foundation for her subsequent legal profession and political trajectory.

Professional Background:

commenced legal career in the Supreme Court in the year 1990. From 2014 until 2017, held the position of Additional Solicitor General of India. In 2014, the individual was elected as a Member of Parliament representing the New Delhi seat.

II. CONCLUSION

Women lawyers must assume an equitable and significant part in the advancement of a progressive society. Enhancing the conventional position of female lawyers is an essential initial measure in their daily endeavors. In order to facilitate

the active involvement of women in the legal profession. One primary objective is to facilitate a qualitative enhancement in the involvement of female legal practitioners.

The issues of women's rights and gender equality continue to be urgent concerns in India, as women encounter diverse manifestations of prejudice and aggression. Nevertheless, there have been notable advancements in recent years, such as the active participation of legal professionals advocating for women's rights in advancing gender parity and fairness.

The legal profession in India has witnessed notable progress for women, who have effectively surmounted gender barriers to gain prominent positions within their field. This article centers on the 10 prominent and influential female lawyers currently involved in legal practice inside the country. The aforementioned accomplishments serve as a prime illustration of women's capacity to thrive within the legal domain and effectively engage in competition with their male colleagues. The extraordinary achievements of these trailblazing legal pioneers provide inspiration for any ambitious young lady considering a career in law. Although women face ongoing challenges in the largely male Indian legal system, the amazing accomplishments of these exceptional lawyers provide proof that obstacles to progress may be surmounted. The recounting of their histories is necessary to motivate future generations of women to pursue excellence and realize their potential.

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