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WITNESS

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YOUR WITNESS PLEASE!



Raising the Bar

Somesh Tiwari – A Legacy Lawyer

In its endeavor to spot the next-gen rising stars in the Indian legal fraternity, Lex WITNESS met Somesh Tiwari, Managing Partner, Vardharma Chambers, who studied law in Mumbai and is currently managing a law firm in New Delhi. Here are some interesting excerpts of our conversation with Somesh.

LW Bureau

AS A LEGACY LAWYER, WHAT ARE THE VARIOUS UNDERCURRENTS OF THIS JOURNEY?

I think the term 'legacy lawyer' is not entirely accurate to describe me or those like me who come from a legal background. Each person builds his/her own legacy; as far as that goes, mine is still very much in its nascent stage.

With that being said, and being fully conscious of the opportunities I have had, coming from a legal background has its challenge, primarily the weight of expectations. My father and grandfather were both incredibly successful legal professionals – the former at the Bench and the latter at the Bar. So my most significant task now is to bring value to people's lives and our profession in a way that is unique to me but, at the same time, does justice to the privilege and opportunities I have had.

DO YOU THINK 1ST GENERATION LAWYERS HUSTLE AND FIND IT MORE CHALLENGING TO SETTLE THEIR FIRMS?

Absolutely. Unlike me, for whom learning began at home, a 1st generation lawyer has to start from scratch and be highly enterprising. The 1st generation of a lawyer needs to be relentless if they wish to have a successful practice of their own or a firm. It cannot be overstated how difficult it is.

But some of this country's most outstanding legal professionals come from no legal backgrounds. The best example is our Former Chief Justice of India Shri N.V Ramana, who hails from a background in agriculture. Another great example is Mr. Arvind Datar, now a doyen of the Supreme Court Bar, and Mr. Chetan Sharma, the ASG at the Delhi High Court, with whom I've had the pleasure to work. These are

only a few among several lawyers who have not only built good practices from scratch but have become some of the most sought-after practitioners. I must hasten to add that my senior Mr. Abhimanyu Bhandari is a first-generation lawyer under whom I worked in my initial years as a lawyer and who continues to guide me every single step.

WHAT BRINGS YOU TO LAW AS A PROFESSION AND PASSION TO DRIVE IT FORTH?

Since school, I have enjoyed being on stage for debates and extempore speeches. In addition, I enjoy being an orator and always endeavor to use it to bring a positive impact whenever I have the opportunity to speak. Fortunately for me, this translates well to our profession.

I also feel that law as a profession is the best medium to bring change and add value to people's lives and our society



in general. Some of our greatest parliamentarians have been lawyers, and some of our most tremendous lawyers have contributed immensely to policy-making solely through their contributions in court. That is my ultimate aspiration.

WHICH DOMAIN IS THE CLOSEST TO YOU AMONG ALL OTHER PRACTICE AREAS?

Arbitration and white-collar crimes, without a doubt. I developed a liking for arbitration thanks to my senior, Mr. Abhimanyu Bhandari, with whom I attended many proceedings. It is the best way forward for resolving commercial disputes and is only becoming more prevalent with each passing day.

White-collar crimes were also one of the first few fields I started working in. Trial law is exciting and highly challenging – the law is constantly evolving, and you have to stay on your feet. White-collar crime is an ideal way to engage in criminal trials without exposing myself to ‘knife & blood’ crimes or sexual offences, which is where I draw the line.

HOW DO YOU BALANCE BETWEEN LAWYERING AND MANAGING THE FIRM?

I don't think the two are mutually exclusive regarding skills required. It would help if you were confident in your practice and in managing your firm. In both, you need to surround yourself with trustworthy and capable people. Much like in court and in office, the people around you define your success. Further, the routine you develop, thanks to practicing, translates directly into effective administration in a firm. Perhaps the only fundamental part that needs to be ‘managed’ is the time spent in meetings vis-à-vis the time spent preparing for court. I am also blessed to have a team of extremely talented individuals who can seamlessly switch and help me in both spheres.

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE LIBERALIZATION OF THE INDIAN LEGAL FRATERNITY?

The Indian legal profession has grown significantly, especially in the past decade. It is now an extremely competitive space, which translates to better access to justice for the commoner. A silver lining in the dark cloud that was COVID-19 was the modernization of our judicial system. Technology and innovation have taken up an important role in what used to be one of the most traditional professions in the country. Liberalization of our profession will only lead to better access to justice and perhaps help dispose of our immense backlog.

WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TO THE RUSH OF ENTREPRENEURS IN THE FIELD OF LAW?

I have three-fold advice for those just beginning. First, be clear about the kind of practice you want and concentrate on building that. Avoid wasting resources by chasing multiple different things at once. Secondly, be mindful of the network and team you create. It would be best if you were surrounded by people who share your ambitions. Without a team you trust, you will only get so far. Lastly, read. The most critical piece of advice to give any young lawyer. Much of our success hinges on our ability to articulate our thoughts better than the next person. You can read magazines, fiction novels, biographies, judgments, anything you fancy. But you should never give up on reading. 