

SQUARE PEGS IN ROUND SLOTS: DEALING WITH DIVERSITY IN LAW SCHOOLS

An Abstract for CLC 2006

Submitted by

Chinmayi Arun

Advocate

There is a profile that law students are expected to fit – proficient in English, assertive, capable of dancing circles around most people in terms of playing on words or logical reasoning for instance. When people who do not fit the profile enter law school, they find themselves dealing with a set-up that was not designed keeping them in mind. Persons with disability, women, people from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and people from socially disempowered groups are among those that tend to face this problem. The Reservation system makes a conscious attempt to bring some of these marginalised groups of people into law school but more could be done to make law school conducive for them.

The first issue that needs to be addressed is whether diversity is desirable in law school. Is the law student stereotype justified? Should logical reasoning and effective communication be the major priority for a effective lawyer?

If we decide that diversity is desirable in law school, how does one preserve and make the most of the diversity? Do we bring diversity into law school to make the marginalised resemble the dominant groups more closely? Or are there ways in which marginalised students can be integrated into law school, without having to compromise on their identity and without struggling as much.

These issues are examined primarily with respect to the five year law schools such as the National Law School of India University, NALSAR University of Law and National University of Juridical Sciences. An attempt will be made to establish that diversity in a classroom may be accommodated and may be utilized so as to be beneficial to both the marginalised and the dominant group students. Some ways in which this might be achieved will also be discussed.

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chinmayiarun@gmail.com