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Book Review: Legal Eagles: Stories of the top seven Indian Lawyers by Indu Bhan

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Indu Bhan is one of India's finest legal reporters with a decade of expertise writing on the legal framework. She lives in Delhi and is an assistant editor with the Financial Express. She also pens a weekly column, 'Verdict Corner' that reflects on the recent happenings in the field of law. She has also worked with some of the renowned media houses including Business Standard, Mint, and the Press Trust of India.

ABOUT THE BOOK

As the title says, the book is about stories of the top seven Indian lawyers. To be more precise it contains the journey of lawyers from their childhood to the hall of legal fame. The landmark events and hardships in their lives are highlighted in this book. The introduction begins with a quote from William Shakespeare's drama Julius Caesar. The book gives major insights into the remarkable cases handled by each of the lawyers inclusive of the Vodafone tax case, the 2G spectrum case, and many more. The book has a motivating and captivating narrative.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE JOURNEY OF THE SEVEN LAWYERS

Harish Salve, the invincible, was born on 22 June 1956 in Nagpur. His journey is inspiringly described from the earning of a stipend of Rs. 50 to the cases involving giants like Ambani, Mahindra, and the list continues. His rise has been narrated from the failure of completion of chartered accountancy twice to being a senior advocate and then as the solicitor general and further to black stone chambers.

MUKUL ROHATGI, was born on 17 August 1955 in Mumbai. He was brought up in New Delhi. Described as an extraordinary journey, he did all sorts of cases like handling property and family disputes, intellectual property cases, criminal cases, and corporate cases. The struggle of his initial years later leads him to become the face of the 2g spectrum case and the coal scam case. His only mantra is work, work, and work.

Abhishek Manu Singhvi was born on 24 February 1959, in Jodhpur. Abhishek in his legal career has been the ASG, vice president of Supreme Court Bar Association, also the foremost senior lawyer of the country, designated as a senior advocate by the SC. He was part of landmark judgement cases like the national flag case, Mandal case, NTC Bombay mills case, and many more. His only mantra in the legal field is not carrying the baggage of cases in one's mind.

Arvind P. Datar was born on 26 September 1956 in Mumbai. The perfectly given title to him, the one who never gives up. From back-to-back setbacks in his life, the one thing he never forgot was his gratitude towards life. He faced a lot of struggles in his legal field but he didn't give up, he practised along with writing and publishing his books.

Aryama Sundaram was born on 22nd April 1957 in Chennai. A lawyer who from his childhood only wanted to be in the legal field as this dream was fitted in him by his grandfather who himself was also a lawyer. He was the first one to file a case against medical malpractice for his friend and this case is considered as his turning point by him.

Prashant Bhushan was born on 15th October 1956 in Allahabad. He was born in a family of lawyers and is known for his PILs which made many significant changes in society. The seeds of his legal career were sown in him unknowingly when he was asked to make notes by his father in the case against Indira Gandhi in 1971. He also has written the book on the same, titled, "The Case That Shook India".

Rohinton Nariman was born on 13th August 1956 in Mumbai. He belonged to a 'priestly' family but neither his father nor his grandfather opted for the rigorous rituals of priesthood but he willingly opted for it to keep his mother's heart. Though his childhood was tough he didn't let that overcome his bright future. He became a senior in the apex court and later became solicitor general. Though his father was a famous jurist, he didn't become his junior, he wanted to be on his own.

ANALYSIS

The book has the life journey of the seven eminent Indian lawyers. Indu Bhan has given her basis of selection of these particular seven lawyers in the author's note. She says that these lawyers are the ones who were watched out for in the post-liberalization era. She adds that they represent a new generation of greatness after the era of eminent lawyers like Ram Jethmalani, Fali Nariman, and so on. The introduction of each lawyer begins with an inspiring quote and each lawyer has been given a title following their journey, which gives the reader a clue about their life struggles and victory. The given titles have been appropriately justified later in their life odyssey. The life of the lawyers from their childhood to the present have been efficiently divided into several parts, commonly those headers are the background, life in the legal field, approach as a lawyer, significant cases, daily routine, and ending by the hall of legal fame. At the end of the description of the lawyer's life, one landmark case of each, which was in great attention in their time has been provided. The notable part is that the landmark case is explained with such terminology that even laymen could understand the insights of the case. In general, too, the book explains every legal term or legal abbreviation, so that every reader could understand the specifics of their struggle and victories. And this is a notable point. A uniform way of explaining the landmark case has been adapted, it divides the case

into four parts i.e., *The Case*, which names the case and the bench; *Case Details*; *Impact*, explaining the impact of judgment in the society; *Winning Strokes*, explaining the winning arguments of the lawyer. This division leads to an easy understanding of insights of the cases for the reader.

The book gives a useful and learning perspective to upcoming lawyers as in the journey of struggles to the legal victories, the lawyers have given many useful mantras from how to prepare a case to how to present it in front of a judge. Also, the author has made a specific header in the characterisation of the lawyers i.e., *A Perfect lawyer*, this section explains their meaning of a perfect lawyer and their approach to be the same. This section is particularly concerned with useful insights for a person who is in the legal field. There are many common aspects in the lives of the seven lawyers but there are some very minute details on which the light should be brought upon which are common in each of them. All the seven lawyers had a fixed exercise schedule, though each had a different one, the point is that in the hectic schedule they maintained a time slot to exercise to keep their minds and body fit and the other small detail is that all of them were still connected to their childhood friends and meet them often. The author has described these minute details so efficiently that one can learn from their personal lives too. It is not only an inspiring book for legal professionals but also for other people, though it specifically talks about legal hardship and legal success. This is because of the thought-provoking experiences which are described in this book. It gives the reader the sense of not giving up in the struggle period, the extraordinary journey of each of them indicates the art of perseverance which lead to success in their life.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

One of the disappointments felt was that no female lawyer was selected for the book. All seven legal eagles are male. And the same is addressed as a regret by the author in the author's note. She expressed her regret as that being a woman herself, she wasn't able to include a woman lawyer. Another disappointment that I felt personally was that out of seven lawyers, six lawyers were from a legal background. Only one lawyer was a first-generation lawyer. It is considered that lawyers being from a legal background family are born with a silver spoon but

the six also faced hard times, they too saw ups and downs of life and never gave up. Still, a reasonable proportion between first-generation lawyers and lawyers from legal backgrounds could have been maintained for the selection. But none the less as the author has said that there may be omissions but none of them is intentional. Moreover, the journey of each one in the book is truly inspirational and thought-provoking.

CONCLUSION

India is blessed with many eminent lawyers and the book is about seven of those lawyers who can be truly called legal eagles as they have seen enormous hardships that they overcome and entered the frame of legal fame. The book will empower budding lawyers. A law student must give it a read as there are immense learnings given by the lawyers which will help in shaping a legal mind. Indu Bhan has done a fabulous job in putting up the learning of the whole life of legal eagles in a very concise manner.