

Trilegal

Praise for the book

‘This book is not just about the growth of a law firm; it is a chronicle of how institutions take shape in a traditional profession that is beginning to modernise. In telling Trilegal’s story, it vividly captures the larger journey of Indian law from small chambers of legacy to practices of governance and scale. This engaging account of Trilegal shows how professionalism, trust and collective decision-making can create an inspiring template for law practice in India.’

– **Hon’ble Mr Justice (Retired) Sanjay Kishan Kaul**

Former Judge of the Supreme Court of India

‘This book is a fascinating account of how a new generation of lawyers built an institution in step with India’s own transformation. Trilegal’s story is one of the democratisation of legal firms, in harmony with how India has changed after the liberalisation of 1991 and the flowering of Indian talent.’

– **Nandan Nilekani**

Co-founder and Chairman, Infosys, and Founding Chairman, UIDAI (Aadhaar)

‘The evolutionary trajectory of Trilegal is in many ways the story of India’s law firm market – from family firms and charismatic founders to collective leadership and globally competitive practices. This incisive book captures that transition with unusual candour and insight. What sets this evocative account apart is that it speaks not only of victories but also of doubts, reforms and reinvention. It is rare to find such honesty in a profession that often guards its secrets closely.’

– **Abhishek Singhvi**

Fourth-Term Sitting MP; Former Additional Solicitor General of India; Member, Congress Working Committee

Trilegal

The Making of a
Modern Indian Law Firm

Akshay Jaitly



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To my partners – past, present and future



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Introduction

Many people have established law firms. Millions more have started businesses. Why is Trilegal's story worth telling?

When we set up in early 2000, there were fewer than ten lawyers in the firm, six of them the founders. Today, the firm has about 1,200 lawyers, including 145 partners, making it possibly the largest full-service, top-tier firm in India. How did this happen?

Law firms in India have traditionally been family-run, or founded and controlled by one or two key individuals. Trilegal followed a different path: six founders, widely dispersed ownership and collective decision-making. This model set us apart from other top-tier Indian firms and invited curiosity about how we operated. Over time, that curiosity widened into questions not only about how we stayed together, but also about how we scaled, governed ourselves, navigated alliances, dealt with crises and responded to a changing market.

Just a few years after we started, people were already asking how the six founders had stayed together for as long as we had. Shortly after Reliance Industries split, I remember being asked: 'Even brothers fail to stay together in business – what's your secret?' Twenty-five years on, barring one amicable departure, the founders remain at the firm. This is one of the questions the book will address, but not the only one.

I had never taken much interest in the theory of why founders stick together but it seemed useful to see what leading management thinkers had to say, and how their ideas related to our own experience. Simon Sinek's idea of the 'why' highlights the role of a shared purpose beyond profit.¹ Jim Collins talks about 'getting the right

people on the bus' and in the right seats.² Peter Drucker stresses the importance of open, honest and frequent communication.³ And Collins and Jerry Porras underline mutual respect and trust as foundations for long-term collaboration.⁴

These principles sound obvious, even trite, but I found them deeply relatable, and each remains part of the Trilegal story. Our 'why' evolved from wanting to create a positive workplace to having the ambition to compete at the top end of the legal market. The founders brought different but complementary skills, experiences and personalities. We disagreed often, and sometimes deeply, but communicated constantly. Even if we rarely said it out loud, each of us saw merit in others' abilities and believed they acted in what they thought were the firm's best interests.

But theory only takes you so far. There is always an element of mystery – perhaps even alchemy – in why some ventures succeed. And then there is luck – the randomness of the universe. Malcolm Gladwell's account of Bill Gates in *Outliers* shows how timing, context and opportunity shape even the most famous success stories.⁵ Gates acknowledges luck, as do Warren Buffett,⁶ Phil Knight,⁷ Reid Hoffman⁸ and, most explicitly, Jeff Bezos.⁹

We acknowledge luck as well. In our case, three early strokes of luck stand out: first, that six young lawyers with shared personal and professional values came together at the right moment; second, that this happened a few years after India's transformative 1991 reforms – before legacy firms could capitalise on a liberalising market and scale up; and third, that the founders maintained the chemistry needed to stay committed to each other and the original vision.

Luck, however, is not a strategy. It explains moments, not careers. What is replicable are the lessons we learnt: how to translate values into governance and incentives, how to make partnership structures work, how to sustain culture through and in spite of growth, how to navigate alliances and how to adapt to a market that has changed almost beyond recognition since 2000.

This book is about those lessons. It is about building a small and unknown professional services firm into an institution. It is about the

decisions, mistakes, experiments and adjustments that shaped us, and the people – both inside and outside the firm – who influenced us. Additionally, since Trilegal's story unfolded alongside the evolution of the modern Indian legal market, this book also offers a lens on that wider transformation.



Part 1

Origins and Context



1

What Do Law Firms Actually Do?

Unless you happen to be a law student, a client or someone otherwise orbiting the somewhat insular world of corporate legal practice, you might struggle to answer a simple question: *What on earth does a corporate law firm actually do?*

If this is you, you are not alone. Here is a typical conversation many corporate lawyers have found themselves having with members of the general population.

Random Person: And what do you do?

Corporate Lawyer: I'm a lawyer.

Random Person [*trying to display their knowledge of the legal profession*]: Ah, high court or Supreme Court? Civil or criminal? [*If the interlocutor is a policeman, they may well ask 'Tis Hazari or Patiala House?' – referring to the best known criminal courts in Delhi – to establish complicity as a fellow insider in the legal system.*]

Corporate Lawyer: Oh please get me out of here.

Most, but Not All, Lawyers Go to Court

If this conversation were to continue and the corporate lawyer were to say that he or she didn't go to court at all and was something called a 'corporate lawyer', the most predictable response would be a blank one. The more worldly wise might nod knowingly and quip, '*Accha aap liasoning ka kaam karte hain*' [Aha, you are in the 'liaisoning' business]?, a barely polite euphemism indicating that they

know some lawyers who perform the sometimes questionable task of ‘dealing’ with government authorities on behalf of their clients – mildly unethical middlemen at best, out and out purveyors of illegal rents at worst. The idea that there exists a category of lawyers who neither go to court nor facilitate dodgy quid pro quos has not quite penetrated the imagination of the general public.

As the judiciary is one of the three pillars of the modern nation-state, the court system and the legal practitioners who appear in court are central to the popular image of lawyers. After all, it is these aspects of the legal system that are most concerned with the rule of law and delivery of justice. And the facts reinforce the stereotype – over 95 per cent of India’s qualified lawyers are litigators, most of them solo practitioners. Only a vanishingly small percentage work in law firms focused on corporate practice. Whether in a large metropolis or in the smallest mofussil town, when people think ‘lawyer’ they think ‘courtroom’.

It is an image rich with symbols – an advocate in flowing black robes, addressing a judge seated on a high platform in even more elaborate robes, polished teak – and the stakes are always very high, the tone is dramatic and everyone holds their breath as the protagonist advocate brilliantly argues a point upon which the entire case irresistibly pivots in favour of their client. The legal scholar Marc Galanter also observes that the public images of lawyers are largely shaped by adversarial courtroom roles, and the quieter but equally vital work of counselling and transaction structuring are sidelined.¹⁰

Real Lawyers vs Bollywood Lawyers

Dramatised impressions of the legal profession come mostly from popular culture, films in the old days and OTT series today. These mediums convey a grossly inaccurate view of what happens in a courtroom. Day-to-day proceedings in most courtrooms across the country are drab, boring and often soul-destroyingly tedious. Hearings are adjourned again and again, and lawyers waste countless hours – even days – waiting for their matter to be called. Judgments

can take years, even decades. The common (and generally correct) perception is that justice in India moves at a glacial pace.

‘Real’ courtroom life in India does not lend itself to being depicted in Bollywood (or any of the other ‘woods’), though independent cinema can sometimes capture the pathos of the common man’s search for justice through the courts.¹¹ Despite improvements, including through specialised courts and tribunals, overall pendency in Indian courts remains. Massive, with over 50 million cases languishing in the system.¹² The cliché immortalised by Sunny Deol in *Damini* (1993) – ‘*tareekh pe tareekh* [date after date]’ – captures the reality as well as anything else.

On the other hand, law firms have figured far less in popular culture. Shows like *Ally McBeal* and *Suits* are set in law firms, but these too largely stay within the world of litigation and adversarial battles. In India, law firms hardly appear in popular culture. A recent exception is *Illegal*, the Amazon Prime series whose fictional Delhi law firm happens to have a managing partner called Janardhan Jaitley (no relation), whose son – Akshay Jaitley, if you can believe it – also works there. You could call it coincidence or something to do with the fact that one of the actors in the series, Satyadeep Mishra, used to work at Trilegal and is a dear friend. The storyline revolves around a death row appeal and a sexual harassment lawsuit – compelling subjects but still well within the courtroom drama genre.

The Legal World beyond Courtrooms

Far from crowded courtrooms lies the hidden arena of corporate law – a world that exists out of public sight, in quiet offices, plush boardrooms and long email chains. When businesses need to navigate regulatory landscapes, structure complex deals and anticipate risks in a new business, they contact a different breed of lawyers – the corporate lawyer. These lawyers operate within the formal economy, advising companies, financial institutions, investors and entrepreneurs. Broadly, their work falls into two categories: disputes and transactions.

The contentious or disputes side is easier to picture. Corporate litigators represent clients in business disputes. This could take place in various forums: from the Supreme Court of India and high courts down to district courts, and increasingly in specialised regulatory bodies and arbitral tribunals. But for most larger firms, the transactional side dominates. Based on the Trilegal example, I'd estimate the ratio is roughly 75:25.

Transactional lawyers structure, negotiate and execute business transactions: mergers and acquisitions, financings, joint ventures, public offerings and commercial agreements. The transactional side is less intuitive. When my children were small, I struggled for years to explain what I did for a living; 'No, I don't go to court' was never a satisfying answer.

Transactional Lawyers Are Risk Managers

Corporate lawyers are, in essence, risk managers. When a company wants to acquire another business, corporate lawyers anticipate what could go wrong and build protections into the deal structure. If the target company has hidden environmental liabilities or pending litigation, corporate lawyers structure warranties and indemnities so that their client does not bear those costs.

The work could involve conducting due diligence to identify legal risks, drafting and reviewing contracts, and advising on regulatory compliance. As risk can be expressed in monetary terms, one reason why transactional lawyers are paid high fees is because they help their clients protect or make large amounts of money.

This work has become more important as India's economy has formalised and integrated with global markets. When Tata acquired Jaguar Land Rover or when global private equity funds invest in Indian start-ups, these transactions require lawyers who understand both Indian regulations and international deal-making. Legal complexity grows significantly when deals cross borders, involve multiple regulatory approvals or require sophisticated financing structures.

Some of what corporate lawyers do overlaps with other business professionals like chartered accountants and management consultants. The difference lies in their tools: while accountants work with balance sheets and consultants analyse market data, lawyers operate within the vast and intricate framework of the law.

Another useful way to explain the difference between disputes lawyers and transactional lawyers is to use an analogy from medicine. Peter Attia, the longevity expert, distinguishes between Medicine 2.0 (which tries to fix medical conditions after they arise) and Medicine 3.0, which prevents conditions from arising in the first place through nutrition, exercise and lifestyle interventions.¹³ Disputes lawyers practise the legal equivalent of Medicine 2.0 – a problem arises for a client and they find a solution for it. Transactional lawyers are like preventive care doctors, exponents of the legal version of Medicine 3.0. They know where problems tend to arise and they take measures to prevent them using contracts and the law.

Specialised Expertise for Complex Business

Modern corporate practice is too complex for generalists. Larger firms will have specialist groups: corporate, banking, tax, real estate, competition law, capital markets, labour and employment, technology, and energy and infrastructure.

For example, a fintech company going public needs capital markets lawyers who understand how the technology is affected by securities regulations. A pharmaceutical company entering India needs specialists who can navigate drug approval processes. A real-estate fund building a nation-wide portfolio needs lawyers who understand land acquisition laws state by state.

What a Typical Deal Might Look Like

Consider, for example, the bare bones of what might happen when a multinational company wants to acquire an Indian family business:

- **Structuring the Deal:** Should they buy shares or assets? How to minimise tax impact while satisfying foreign investment

regulations and share valuation guidelines? Should the promoters be asked to stay on for some years? Lawyers design an optimal structure balancing legal compliance with tax efficiency and business needs.

- **Due Diligence:** Lawyers spend weeks, even months, reviewing everything from employment contracts to environmental clearances, looking for problems that could cost millions later. They review corporate records, regulatory filings, vendor contracts, employee agreements, leases and more – searching for risks, particularly non-obvious ones.¹⁴
- **Documentation:** Transaction agreements might run into tens or hundreds of pages, with dozens of annexes. Lawyers draft share purchase agreements, shareholders' agreements and ancillary contracts.
- **Negotiation:** Who pays if the company faces a retrospective tax claim? What happens if key employees quit? Lawyers negotiate key clauses like warranties, indemnities and non-compete obligations. All of this could take several months.
- **Closing:** On closing day, lawyers coordinate multiple document signings, regulatory approvals and fund transfers, perhaps across different time zones. Once conditions precedent are fulfilled, they manage the formal signing and financial settlement – when the money actually changes hands – ensuring the deal 'closes' cleanly.

A Real-World Example

A great illustration of the process outlined above is Trilegal's long-standing work for Heineken in India. From the time the company first sought to deepen its presence in the country, the legal challenges were layered: how to structure its entry, comply with foreign investment regulations and manage relationships with Kingfisher (which involved Sridhar Gorthi – one of the founders – once being offered a 'lift' back from Dubai on Vijay Mallya's private jet). Over the years, we advised on licencing arrangements, foreign exchange regulation compliance, shareholder agreements and the

governance frameworks necessary to build a durable presence in the tightly regulated alcohol industry.

In 2021, Heineken acquired an additional 14.99 per cent stake in United Breweries from the Debt Recovery Tribunal, taking its total shareholding to more than 61 per cent and giving it majority control.¹⁵ The work required transactional execution, navigation of regulatory approvals and, later, defence in high-profile competition proceedings.

This is how corporate lawyers operate outside the courtroom spotlight: structuring cross-border investments, aligning them with local regulation and staying engaged through both the relatively smooth phases of deal-making and the potentially adversarial stages of regulatory scrutiny.

The Value of the Work

Done well, this work creates substantial economic value. When lawyers structure a deal efficiently, they can save clients millions in taxes. When they spot a hidden liability, they prevent catastrophic losses. When they draft clear contracts, they enable large investments and prevent disputes.

The work is intellectually demanding, legally complex and commercially critical. However, it does not lend itself to the cinematic drama of courtroom showdowns; no blockbuster films are being made about a perfectly worded limitation of liability clause.

As India's economy has matured and diversified, corporate law firms have become indispensable to the business ecosystem. The top firms in India advise the largest Indian and global companies on billion-dollar deals, regulatory challenges and corporate strategy.

Law firms in India are not new – they have existed for almost two centuries – but their scale, specialisation and visibility have expanded significantly only in recent decades. Understanding their history helps explain how corporate law firms have evolved so dramatically in recent times – from colonial-era partnerships serving British trading companies to today's sophisticated institutions advising on multi-billion-dollar deals.

There is little dedicated scholarship on the history of law firms in India (there should be), and an exhaustive exploration is beyond the scope of this book. But a brief and gap-filled overview will help contextualise the evolution of Indian law firms up to the early twenty-first century.

2

Law Firms in India: A Brief History

The Indian law firm landscape in 2025 bears little resemblance to what it looked like even a quarter of a century ago. At the turn of the millennium, the largest law firm in India was Amarchand & Mangaldas & Suresh A Shroff & Co. (hereafter Amarchand Mangaldas), which probably had around 200 lawyers. There were perhaps three or four firms with a hundred lawyers on their books. Most large firms were based in Delhi or Bombay (now Mumbai) and only a handful had offices outside of those cities. Even Bangalore (now Bengaluru) was a bit of a legal services backwater back then.

In the past 25 years, India's nominal GDP (gross domestic product) has grown almost nine times, from US \$468.4 billion in 2000 to \$4,190.0 billion in 2025, with GDP per capita rising from \$442.75 in 2000 to approximately \$2,400 in 2024.¹⁶ Law firms in India have had to grow to service the explosion in commercial activity that has fuelled this growth.

How Big Is the Indian Law Firm Market Today?

It is hard to tell. Given that few firms release data publicly, it is unclear how many lawyers in India work in law firms. Here is a highly speculative and definitely inaccurate estimate.

In 2023, the Ministry of Law & Justice revealed, as a reply to a Rajya Sabha question, that there were 2,013,081 advocates enrolled with State Bar Councils.¹⁷ This seems like a significant underestimate but let's go with it. Asian Legal Business's 2024 ranking lists the

25 largest Indian firms by size. Their published numbers add up to approximately 9,400 lawyers.¹⁸ Extending this survey to the 26–50 bracket (each 50–200 lawyers) gives us a cumulative 14,000–15,000 lawyers. Another study suggests that 12,000 lawyers are working in India's top 100 firms.¹⁹ An informal December 2024 report found 7,421 law firms across India.²⁰ Subtracting the 50 largest ones leaves roughly 7,370 smaller firms. These might employ 1–20 lawyers apiece. Taking an average of 10 lawyers per small firm yields approximately 75,000 lawyers.

Adding the two tiers together (15,000 + 75,000) puts the law-firm workforce in the 90,000–100,000 window. So, India has just over 2 million registered advocates, but less than 5 per cent work in a law firm of any kind; the rest practise as independent litigators, in-house counsel or government law officers.

Accuracy of numbers aside, this is remarkable growth. Other aspects of the law firm ecosystem have also seen enormous change. Salaries have gone up by many multiples, hundreds of law schools have mushroomed all over the country – with approximately 70,000 law graduates joining the profession annually²¹ – and joining a top-tier law firm is almost as desirable today as joining a top corporate.

How did this dramatic transformation of the law firm market take place?

A Hereditary Profession?

India's caste system has existed for thousands of years. For much of this time, caste dictated the contours of an individual's social and economic existence. It determined whom one could marry or eat with, where one could pray and which profession one could pursue (the most relevant restriction for this account). While traditional societies worldwide have witnessed sons following in their fathers' occupational footsteps, the rigidity of hereditary succession has been particularly pronounced in India, entrenched in the caste system's deeply ingrained stratification of labour, and its notions of purity and pollution.

Despite significant legal and societal shifts, vestiges of the caste system persist, particularly in social spaces. However, the rights to equality embodied in the Constitution of India and the need for skilled workers in a modernising economy have eroded explicit caste-based restrictions on a person's choice of occupation.

Yet, the enduring practice of the child (still most often a son) stepping into the shoes of the parent remains a palpable feature of contemporary Indian economic life. Family legacy and hereditary control continue to define the contours of twenty-first-century corporate India, with family-run, promoter-driven enterprises still contributing to a significant share of listed companies.²²

The legal profession is no exception. The practice of law in India was historically a semi-hereditary profession with many well-known families of advocates dominating the upper echelons of the profession. This pattern extends to law firms as well. Many of India's most established firms remain predominantly family-controlled, including prominent examples like Anand & Anand, Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas (CAM), Fox & Mandal, Khaitan & Co, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas (SAM) and Singhanian & Co.

The Colonial Foundation

Unsurprisingly, the history of law firms in India is closely connected to the establishment of the British colonial legal system. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as the East India Company expanded its rule over the Indian subcontinent, there was a concerted effort to introduce a legal framework modelled on English common law. This led to the formation of the first courts in the presidency towns of Calcutta (now Kolkata), Bombay and Madras (now Chennai). This was initially done through the establishment of 'Mayor's Courts' pursuant to the Charter of 1726. These were then replaced by the Supreme Court of Judicature in Calcutta in 1774, established under the Regulating Act of 1773 and subsequent Royal Charter in 1774.²³ In addition to its judicial functions, the Supreme Court had the power to enrol advocates.

While legal practice in those early years was mainly the dominion of English barristers who would interpret and apply English law within the colonial context, the Bengal Regulation Act of 1793 allowed qualified Indians to enrol in the Sadr Diwani Adalat, the highest civil court under the British administration. This was followed by the Legal Practitioners Acts of 1846 and 1879, which enabled Indians to act as pleaders and *vakils* – legal professionals with rights to appear in certain courts.²⁴

The First Law Firms (1830–1920)

Formally organised law practices remained embryonic during this period. Legal practice was predominantly individualistic, though occasional informal partnerships among Britain-trained lawyers popped up to address the demand for legal services brought about by the expansion of the colonial administration and commerce, particularly in the presidency towns.

These informal partnerships provided the groundwork for the emergence of more structured legal practices. The first law firms in India appear to have been Crawford Bayley & Co. (established in 1830) and Little & Co. (founded in 1856), both in Bombay. Initially, as partnerships among British lawyers, these firms served mainly British companies and expatriates, specialising in areas such as commercial transactions and shipping law.

Crawford Bayley & Co. grew to become India's oldest continuously operating law firm. It maintains its historic presence in Mumbai's Fort district, where it has operated for nearly two centuries.²⁵ Little & Co. represented the East India Company, the Secretary of State for India and the Government of Bombay Presidency. They also acted as solicitors to the Great Indian Peninsula Railway and assisted in the incorporation of the Tata Iron and Steel Company.²⁶

The first law firms founded by Indians were established in Bombay in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, predominantly (but not exclusively) by members of the Parsi community. Tyabji Dayabhai was founded in 1872 by the pioneering Badruddin Tyabji – the first

Indian barrister to practise in the High Court of Bombay and a founding member of the Indian National Congress – in partnership with Dayabhai Edulji. Wadia Ghandy followed in 1883, Kanga & Co. in 1890, and Mulla & Mulla came soon after in 1895. An exception to the dominance of Bombay-based firms was Fox & Mandal, founded in 1896 in Calcutta as an unusual partnership (for its time) between an Indian, Gokul Chandra Mandal, and an Englishman, J.K. Fox. All these firms are still in existence.

Three of India's most consequential law firms today trace their genealogy to the period around World War I. The first, Khaitan & Co, was established in 1911 by Debi Prasad Khaitan. In addition to being a top legal practitioner, Khaitan was an active participant in India's independence movement and a contributor to the drafting of the Indian Constitution.²⁷

Two firms – SAM and CAM, both of which formally came into existence in 2015 – are descended from Amarchand Mangaldas, founded in 1917 by Amarchand Shroff and Mangaldas Mehta. In 1980, Amarchand Shroff's son Suresh A. Shroff and his wife Bharati took over the firm. In 1994, following the death of Suresh Shroff, his sons Shardul and Cyril took over the Delhi and Bombay offices, respectively. The legacy firm split in 2015, which was a major event in the history of Indian law firms that we will explore later.

Post Independence: Nationalisation and the Licence Raj

The unification of India's fragmented legal profession through the Advocates Act of 1961 was a key development during this period. The colonial system had created a complex hierarchy with barristers, vakils, pleaders and *mukhtars*. This legislation abolished all distinctions and created a single class of 'advocates' who could practice in any court across India, ending over 200 years of hierarchical divisions.

The socialist, planning-based economy of this period was dominated by the public sector, seen by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru as the guardian of the 'commanding heights of the economy'.

Many previously private companies – including Air India (and eight other airlines), oil and gas companies, heavy engineering firms, and all banks and insurance companies – were nationalised. Most significant private investment came from a handful of large, family-owned business groups, many of whom later formed the Bombay Club.²⁸

Nationalisation was a bonanza for law firms. Bank nationalisation occurred in two phases – 1969 (14 major banks) and 1980 (six more) – bringing over 90 per cent of banking business under government control. Insurance sector nationalisation was equally complex, with the Life Insurance Corporation of India Act (1956) amalgamating 243 insurance companies. Each nationalisation required asset–liability transfers and led to valuation disputes and compensation proceedings.

The Industries (Development and Regulation) Act of 1951 required licences for virtually all significant economic activities. The Licence Raj system created demand for specialised expertise in navigating regulation and dealing with the government. India's distaste for participating in the global economy threw up legal work in foreign exchange regulation under the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (1973) and import–export licencing.

Corporate Work in Socialist India

In this period, firms handled corporate transactions despite the regulated environment. For example, Khaitan & Co managed India's first corporate demerger for the sugar companies Balrampur Chini Mills and Tulsipur Sugar Company Ltd in the 1950s. This was complex since the Companies Act only contemplated mergers. The firm also handled the 1948 Bennett Coleman & Co. deal between R.K. Dalmia and the Sahu Jains, and the Indian Express split in 1990 following Ramnath Goenka's death.

Otherwise, the period was litigation-dominated. Corporate and commercial transactional work remained minimal due to state ownership, limited private activity and restricted foreign investment. The drafting and negotiating skills that corporate lawyers are known