

# 5 Law Firms In India With The Best Media Law Practice

By **Snigdha** - July 26, 2018



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During a three-day Certificate Course on Media and Entertainment Law about 3 years ago at my alma mater, ILS Law College, Pune, I had the good fortune of being a part of an hour long session by Mr. Ameet Naik, the Founding Partner of Naik Naik & Co.

During this one hour of good fortune, Mr. Naik took us through his days of struggle as a young advocate and what led him to form his own law firm. He spoke about why he chose such a niche sector – media and entertainment – to focus his firms practice on, at a time when bollywood in itself was struggling to come of age.

Think about it. While we see so many law firms in India thriving and garnering success because they have a strong transactional or general corporate practice, how many law firms do you know of that are well-known for their practice in media and entertainment laws? How many of them took a chance and ventured out to build a career in this niche and upcoming field of law?

I took the liberty of doing a little bit of research to find out about firms, known names and cases they have to their credit in the media and entertainment sector. Here is what I could come up with:

- **Naik Naik & Co.**

Established in 2004, the firm boasts of a large clientele with big names from the industry such as Mr. Amitabh Bachchan, Ms. Deepika Padukone, Ms. Sonam Kapoor amongst many others. It also represents productions houses such as T-Series, Viacom 18, Endemol and Tips Industries.

With major wins such as securing the stay on the ban notified by four states of India on the screening of Padmavat earlier in the year to the recent win in the Supreme Court for Madhur Bhandarkar and Bharat Shah on the release of their movie Indu Sarkar. Not only does the firm have major wins to their name, but also a number of crucial judgments in the media space are thanks to them. Be it the judgment passed by the Supreme Court in the *Aarakshan Case* in 2011 which is now considered a landmark, to securing *John Doe* orders from the high courts in India to fight the menace of piracy, the firm has a lot of golden hats in its kitty!

In addition, the firm believes in delivering results and relies heavily on the domain knowledge of its resources for the turnaround time. They don't just understand the law, but also understand the business, which helps them deliver better results than their contemporaries in the market.

Ms. Madhu Goradia and Mr. Ravi Suryavanshi are the partners who deal with the Telecom Media and Technology (TMT) practice of this firm. Ms. Goradia alone has represented clients in over 500 cases!

With three office in Bombay and numerous accolades, I believe it is safe to say that Naik dominates the legal business in the media industry. In case you'd like to know more about the firm and their practice, you can visit their website [here](#).

- **DSK Legal**

The firm has a multi-disciplinary team with over a 100 lawyers spread across their offices in Mumbai, Pune and Delhi. If we are to look specifically at the team members that work in the IP Law and TMT sector, three names would have to be mentioned: Mr. Anand Desai (Managing Partner), Ms. Chandrima Mitra (Partner) and Mr. Tushar Ajinkya (Partner).

DSK Legal has been handling both disputes as well as transactions for its media clientele. This is the law firm that represented Salman Khan in the 2002 hit and run case and responsible for the speedy bail they received in the matter within 5 hours of the sentence being pronounced.

On the transaction side, Aamir Khan is an old client of Mr. Desai. The firm was responsible for structuring a finance-cum-distribution deal with PVR for Aamir Khan. Mr. Desai was also responsible for structuring the co-production between Sanjay Leela Bhansali and Sony Pictures for the movie Saawariya. Back then , it was one of the very first times that a major foreign company was co-producing a movie in India and it was absolutely important that the rights to exploitation of the film were negotiated well.

Being a full-service law firm, DSK also advices some of its media clients on tax issues. A number of producers in India look at the option of vesting their rights in the film in Mauritius to save up on tax, especially with the increasing revenue being generated from abroad. Hence, legal advisory on tax is also a service that this firm offers to its media clientele

- **Saikrishna and Associates**

A pioneer in intellectual property laws, Saikrishna and Associates is a full-service law firm with over a 100 lawyers and 19 Partners and Associate Partners. The key names

to note here are Mr. Saikrishna Rajagopal (Managing Partner), Mr. Ameet Datta (Partner, IP and TMT), and Ms. Monica Datta (Partner).

Established in 2001, the firm not only has a huge clientele that includes industry giants such as Star India and Amazon, but also has landmark judgments to its credit. The Doordarshan sports broadcast decision of the Delhi High Court wherein the High Court ruled that Prasar Bharti could only air the footage that other sports broadcasters share with it as mandated by law on terrestrial TV and not on Cable TV is one of the many.

More recently, Sai Krishna was also responsible for securing an order from the Competition Commission of India (CCI) approving the release of Avengers: The Age of Ultron after the commission found no anti-competitive behaviour by the Hollywood producers. The firm was acting on behalf of their client Walt Disney.

- **Nishith Desai & Associates (NDA)**

NDA has been in the news for providing all-around services in the media and entertainment sector to a number of big names in the industry such as the Times Group, Wipro, Reliance Entertainment, Warner Brothers Entertainment Inc., Sahara, MTV, etc. Gowree Gokhale is the Partner concerned for Intellectual Property and TMT.

The firm specialises in advising the entertainment industry on 14 different aspects: Strategy, Structuring, Regulatory, Documentation and Advisory, IP Advisory, Due Diligence, Production Counsel, Talent Arrangements, Sports, Online Gaming and Casino Laws, Print Media, Joint Ventures and M&A, Capital Markets and Funds & Investments, and Litigation.

To mention a few of their important achievements, they have assisted clients in their proposed bids for the Indian Premiere League for the broadcasting rights and their proposed bids for acquiring Indian Premiere Leagues' franchise teams. In addition, NDA acted as production counsel to the critically acclaimed Indian film "Black". As production counsels for "Black", they advised the client on a host of intellectual property issues arising out of the production of the film.

- **Krishnamurthy and Co. (KLaw)**

Nikhil Krishnamurthy is the key person responsible for setting up the Entertainment and Media law practice at KLaw. A former partner at Anand and Anand, Nikhil moved to KLaw as Senior Partner in 2006.

Mr. Krishnamurthy works out of the Bangalore office and has experience of over 18 years. The firm specialises in cases on intellectual property law (IP Litigation), entertainment law, music law, content acquisition, licensing and information technology.

In [an interview with indianlawyer250.com](#), he spoke about his role in India's first case concerning compulsory licensing of music for radio broadcasting. He represented the FM Radio broadcaster (Music Broadcast) and filed the first application before the Copyright Board under the provisions for compulsory licensing for the purpose of radio broadcast in 2001. The provision had never been exercised in the 43 years that the Copyright Act 1957 had been in force. This very case spun a series of litigations that eventually led to amendment of the Copyright Act in 2012.

### **Are these the only law firms that specialise in Media and Entertainment Laws?**

No. This is not an exhaustive list. There are a number of other law firms that have a legal team dedicated to the TMT sector such as Khaitan & Co. and Anand & Anand & Khimani. In addition, TMT Law, a boutique law firm dealing with specifically the TMT sector headed by NLS alumnus Abhishek Malhotra, recently merged with Bharucha & Partners and has a flourishing media litigation practice!

### **The question for many law students and aspiring media lawyers still remain the same: how do we make it to these law firms? What will it take to land a job here?**

The first step is to know the basics of media and entertainment laws and as we can clearly see, with the sort of work these law firms do, a clear understanding of the media industry and the legal/business issues it faces is critical.

Unfortunately, most law schools in India do not teach media and entertainment laws as a course subject at all, and some of them now teach Intellectual Property Rights, although not at all adequately. There are two ways to go about this, either you land a

job (somehow) and learn on the job; or you make a conscious decision of learning the law through the available resources at hand. You could keep a tab on the media and entertainment law columns on Legally India, Bar and Bench and Live Law. You could regularly keep reading blog posts and articles on the industry and watch the news! In addition, you can take up a [media law course](#) online that offers you industry insights and networking opportunities with lawyers working exclusively in this industry. And if you're looking for easy information on the kind of work media lawyers do, there is always SuperLawyer for practical insights!

In my limited experience, the industry is tight-knitted and making it here is difficult to be absolutely honest. The sector is niche, the number of people rooting for a job at these law firms are in hundreds if not thousands, and the positions available are limited. You've got to be mentally prepared for a fight, however, with the right set of skills and domain-knowledge, you may be able to set yourself apart!

Don't stop learning!