



SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND AND ENTRY BARRIERS IN LITIGATION DUE TO LOW STIPENDS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Litigation in India is seen as an aptitude of service towards the public, and it also holds constitutional significance, yet its access revolves around lengthy periods of unpaid or inadequately paid work that only a few socio-economic sections can sustain. It also examines structural barriers that legal interns and junior advocates face due to low stipends and inconsistent pay, which excludes them from being students and first-generation lawyers who come from less favoured background. This article also examines the evolutionary regulatory framework, such as the Bar Council of India's circular recommendation about the minimum stipends of ₹20,000 in urban areas and ₹15,000 in rural areas, High Court interventions, and a one-year pre-enrolment Internship. It also advocates for the stipend practice grounded in the Constitution Article 14, 19(1)(g), 21 and 39A. It also argues that the weakly enforced stipend regime renders entry into Litigation because most of the time, litigants depend upon their private means, family support or inherited professional network. The article concludes by proposing a statutory recognition of minimum stipend, mandatory paid internships and strong supervision and complaint mechanism.

Keywords: Litigation, Article 14, Article 19(1)(g), Article 21, Article 39A.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian legal profession officially rests on ideals of equality, merit and access to justice, but the material conditions under which young lawyers enter and survive in litigation frequently contradict these values. For most law graduates, the early years in courts involve long hours, unpredictable case flows, and either no stipend or nominal amounts that are grossly disproportionate to urban living costs. This has produced a widely recognised but only recently

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acknowledged reality: sustained practice in litigation often presupposes financial cushioning in the form of family income, inherited chambers, or urban property, which many students from rural, lower-income, or historically marginalised communities simply do not possess.

However, recent developments in the form of government and judicial notifications have brought the issue to the fore. In October 2024, the Bar Council of India floated a circular that proposes a minimum monthly stipend of ₹20,000 for junior lawyers in urban areas and ₹15,000 in rural areas, which will have to be paid for at least the first three years of practice and will have to be channelled through banking channels. This is in line with the directions of the Delhi High Court in a public interest litigation filed by advocate Simran Kumari, who has expressed concern about the financial insecurity of junior lawyers. At the same time, the BCI has indicated that it intends to make an internship with practising advocates or legal institutions for a mandatory period of twelve months before enrolment as an advocate compulsory from 2025, which necessarily leads to questions about remuneration during this period.

This article examines how low stipends and unpaid internships operate not only as hindrances for the litigants but also as significant barriers to entry in the world of litigation. It examines how an individual's socio-economic status is related to their professional trajectory, follows the evolution of regulations and judicial decisions regarding stipends, and considers whether these developments are consistent with constitutional ideals of equality, subsistence, and access to justice. The thesis is that stipends must be recognised as a justiciable component of professional regulation and welfare, rather than simply a question of individual benevolence, if we are to have a fair, rather than a socio-economically biased, system of litigation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is very little work available on stipends in India's legal profession, where most of the dialogue arises through investigative journalism, Bar writings, policy documents and practitioner commentaries. It's a recurring theme in the absence of a legal framework which governs the minimum stipends and pay for legal interns and junior advocates, in contrast to the fact that there is a general detailed provision specifically for the workers under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948. Analyst stresses about the junior advocates treated as independent professionals rather than employees who are dependent upon the employer, which chambers and senior advocates use as a legal loophole to work outside the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, even though worker conditions look very similar to dependent employment.

Numerous practitioners highlighted this issue and showed the complete regulatory silence on the BCI's 2024 circular, which was about the "minimum stipends for the junior advocates." The circular was a result of the case of *Simran Kumari v Bar Council of India* before the Delhi High Court, where a group of young lawyers highlighted the issue of economic barriers to enduring in litigation. They also shed light on the circular, which is directory, not mandatory, and there is no specific pay in the circular that the employer shall provide; it depends upon his capacity, which determines how much he can afford, raising doubts where it lacks both uniformity and enforcement.

Another contemporary trend in the legal discourse about the pursuit of internships in the legal domain, specifically the minimally paid or unpaid ones in the top chambers and elite institutions. These internships have now become a de facto portal in highly attractive or demanding litigation jobs, involuntarily filtering out the students who lack the financial resources to afford or sustain themselves in metropolitan cities. The literature reports also showcase the law students who favour paid internships more compared to unpaid ones, which only a few people are able to afford. It also mentions that many brilliant students just dropped out of top litigation offers because they were not able to afford their living expenses and transportation, which were not included in the stipends. It violates the constitutional values of equality, dignity, and just compensation for others and terms the unpaid internship as a "regulatory void."

Lastly, a growing body of commentary, such as experts, journalists, and lawyers, analyses the socio-economic implications of low stipends. It also argues that the current stipend regime, which favours those with family support and an inherited network, debilitates the legitimacy and representativeness of the profession and moves towards "aristocracy" of the Bar. Consequently, they also recognise the actual financial constraints faced by solo litigators and small-town practitioners, suggesting a revamp must amalgamate regulatory compulsion with welfare scheme, state support and court-linked fellowship model.

Socio-Economic Background and the Structure of Litigation Careers: Practising litigation in India is heavily influenced by language, socio-economic status, geography and class. Junior advocates, before they start charging fees or attracting independent clients, have to work under senior advocates or chambers for a few years, and also High Court and Supreme Court situated in metropolitan cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Bengaluru, where living costs are high, can act as a hindrance for them. Students belong to urban, English-medium and upper-

middle-class backgrounds; family support imbibes the income shock of apprenticeship years; the economic shock can be career-ending for many first-generation lawyers from small towns or rural regions.

The cumulative advantages derived from the socioeconomic composition of the Bar. litigants who are graduates of NLUS and metropolitan private institutions, come from privileged backgrounds and have access to networks, can sustain to pursue litigation in big cities, sometimes combining low stipends with family housing or savings. Contrary to this, students who come to government law colleges situated in smaller cities come from lower-income backgrounds and marginalised communities, being compelled to opt for in-house council jobs, law firms, even though they are vigorously enthusiastic towards litigation.

These factors are further compounded by the “chamber system” that exists in the informal way that litigation begins. Young lawyers typically join a senior’s chamber without a contract, fixed working hours, or a clear payment structure; stipends, if negotiated, are usually left vague, and many young lawyers find out only after they have joined that they will receive little to nothing for several months. This combination of uncertainty and the costs involved in joining litigation—enrolment fees, robes, necessary legal texts, bar fees, and travel—makes it a significant barrier to entry for litigation. And because this cost and this lack of clear payment structure affect different people in different ways, it is not a level barrier across social lines.

ECONOMIC REALITIES OF JUNIOR ADVOCATES AND LEGAL INTERNS

In general, the initial stages of litigation are portrayed as being financially pinched. The reports from the empirical research that have been cited in recent discussions indicate that junior lawyers in urban trial courts and High Courts were taking home as little as ₹7,000 to ₹8,000 a month, or about ₹200 to ₹300 a day, while senior lawyers were charging clients by the thousand. In cities such as Mumbai, judges have reported that a young lawyer would need to take home at least ₹45,000 a month just to scrape by with dignity.

The reality that legal interns often face is quite harsh. Many litigation chambers, including the most sought-after ones in Delhi and other major cities, engage interns for the entire day without any stipend or pay that is barely more than a token amount and doesn’t even cover the cost of a day’s travel. The usual example is of a bright student who couldn’t take up a prestigious Delhi litigation chamber internship because there was no money for rent and travel—her example is given as a representative one, not an exception. The survey reveals that three-quarters of law

students favour paid internships, but only a small fraction get a chance to work with a decent stipend, especially in litigation.

Despite the BCI circular issued in 2024, it is generally agreed that the proposed minimum emoluments of ₹20,000 in urban and ₹15,000 in rural areas are not sufficient to meet the actual cost of living in large cities after considering the cost of rent, food, transport, and other professional expenses. However, those who support the BCI circular argue that it is a significant shift in the norm because it recognises that unpaid or inadequately paid work is not consistent with the dignity of the profession.

EMERGING REGULATORY FRAMEWORK ON STIPENDS

The regulatory framework on minimum pay has evolved just recently; there is no single statute that holds any provision on minimum pay for junior advocates, leaving the matter completely on chambers, firms and individual senior advocates. In recent years, a culmination of PIL, Bar mobilisation and judicial concern pushed this matter to form a regulatory framework to govern remuneration specifically for the junior advocates and legal interns.

The Delhi High Court in the case of *Simran Kumari v Bar Council of India*, which came through Out of a PIL seeking a regulated stipend system specifically for the junior advocates, directed the BCI to treat this petition as a representation and determine on minimum stipends within a specific period. Acknowledging it, BCI, through Circular No. BCI: D:5383/2024 on 15 October 2024, endorsing that juniors working under advocates, senior advocates and law firms will get a monthly stipend of ₹20,000 in urban areas and ₹15,000 in rural areas, for at least the first three years of association with them. The circular mentioned certain conditions, such as that payments be made through bank transfer or other verifiable methods, and directed the State Bar Council and Bar Association to disseminate and assist in its implementation.

The courts in various states have gone further in their observations regarding minimum remuneration for the juniors. Madras High Court instructed the State Bar Council to make sure a minimum pay of 20,000/15,000 for junior advocates in Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai and other parts of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, specifically terming the extraction of juniors as a violation of fundamental rights and exploitative in nature. The Punjab and Haryana High Court entertained a PIL pursuit of minimum pay for young advocates and interns, and issued a notice to the BCI and State Bar Council to respond to it. State-level mechanisms in Kerala, Tamil

Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand have also tried to give direct financial assistance through government schemes and Bar welfare mechanisms to junior advocates.

The Bombay High Court entertained a PIL seeking a mandatory pay of ₹5,000 monthly stipend for junior advocates in Maharashtra, which has accentuated the judicial limitation. Even though the bench supported the idea of stipends presented through PIL, the court said it cannot enforce the right in the absence of a statutory framework.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND AS A DETERMINANT OF CAREER CHOICE

The impact of money matters on career decisions appears most obviously just after graduation. Where academic achievement is comparable, students tend to end up on different trajectories based on whether their families can afford to subsidise a few years of low or iffy income. Those from middle- or upper-class city families can afford to view the first three to five years of litigation as an investment, sometimes supplementing stipends with savings, family assistance, or rent-free housing. By contrast, students who support themselves to pay off educational loans or to support family budgets can't afford to take up litigation, even if they are passionately interested in public law or trial practice.

The disparity widens when top litigation internships and junior positions are unpaid. Top chambers in constitutional, commercial, or criminal practice offer unparalleled opportunities for learning and networking, but they also commonly require interns and juniors to pay for living and transport costs in pricey cities, sometimes for a year or longer. Testimony from students who had to forgo such opportunities because they couldn't afford the rent or travel costs illustrates how unpaid internships effectively price out otherwise bright and qualified candidates from lower-income families. In this fashion, socioeconomic status becomes a hidden filter, even when hiring is formally advertised as strictly merit-based.

There is, too, an intergenerational dimension. Children of practising lawyers often benefit from networking, visibility, and implicit guarantees of support during the tough times of practice, while first-generation lawyers face not only financial insecurity but also informational and social deficits in accessing top chambers. Low stipends do not operate in a vacuum; instead, they further entrench deeper structural inequalities of class, caste, region, and language in the legal profession.

CONSTITUTIONAL AND JURISPRUDENTIAL DIMENSIONS

Stipend practices have historically been seen as an internal affair of the profession; they're increasingly given recognition, which entails core constitutional values. Analysts have argued that unpaid or inadequate remuneration for junior advocates and interns violates Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees equality and non-arbitrariness, and the systematic ostracisation of economically marginalised aspirants from practising litigation. Many analysts also say that professions like advocacy depend upon private wealth, depending upon which junior advocates or interns can do an internship because they can absorb the financial shock arising from the living expenses in metropolitan cities. State and BCI cannot remain silent on this issue when only a few have access to advocacy, and others can't because of their financial constraints.

The Supreme Court's interpretation of Article 21 incorporates the right to live with dignity and a livelihood that is fair and just. This jurisprudence has largely evolved in the context of social welfare and in the context of labour. It offers a canonical lens for evaluating the exploitation of junior advocates and interns. Bar-related commentary heavily relies on a series of cases to show that the requirement of full-time work without sufficient pay in a profession that requires years of investment without pay constitutes a violation of substantive due process and fair wage provisions, despite the lack of formal status as "employees" for the juniors. Even Article 19(1)(g) of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees the freedom to practice any profession, is also relevant, as the economic structure surrounding litigation makes it impossible for anyone but those with pre-existing access to economic support to enter this litigation or advocacy.

Even in DPSP, Article 39A compels the state to ensure that the legal system promotes justice based upon equal opportunity and free legal aid so that economic and other disabilities do not restrict the opportunities for securing justice. A bar that is socio-economically monolithic and perverted towards the opulent is subpar to serve this mandate. Likewise, Articles 41 and 43 of the Indian Constitution, which mention the right to work and living wages, even if they are not directly enforceable, stipulate a policy cornerstone for statutory intervention in bolstering junior advocates.

Courts are beginning to mirror these concerns in other areas of relevance. The Supreme Court, in cases involving MBBS interns, has resisted unequal or insufficient stipends by stating that

interns doing the same work, whether domestic or foreign, should receive the same pay. It also expressed discomfort with colleges charging high tuition while paying interns meagre stipends. While these decisions are specific to the medical community, they reflect a more general concern with exploitative training arrangements that can be extrapolated to the legal community. As mentioned earlier, High Courts have specifically labelled the exploitation of unpaid labour by junior advocates as exploitative and unconstitutional, even if they have not yet recognised a right to a stipend without new legislation.

ENTRY BARRIERS ACROSS THE LITIGATION PIPELINE

Law stipends can create a barrier for junior lawyers who want to pursue their career in litigation during pre-enrolment internship, the initial year of practice, and progression towards independent practice.

Firstly, moving towards a twelve-month internship before enrolment can be good for professional training, but it can be a hindrance for those who want to pursue their career in litigation and are not financially strong enough to sustain themselves without getting remuneration. Law graduates have to spend a full year under supervision in the legal department or courts before they can enrol as advocates; throughout, they cannot earn money independently. Lacking guaranteed pay, this prerequisite could operate as an additional barrier, dissuading those who cannot afford to delay stable income for yet another year.

Secondly, the first three to five years after getting enrolled are generally the most financially vulnerable years for a litigator. Junior lawyers mostly subsist on chamber fees, with the occasional drafting or appearance fee, but without social security, health benefits, or a steady income. And in big-city practice, they are also confronted with plenty of fixed expenses simultaneously: rents close to the court, daily transport, obligatory formal wear, Bar membership dues, and the price of basic law reports or subscriptions. If remuneration is low or irregular during this period, many bright but financially vulnerable lawyers will drift away, entering the corporate world, government service, or other non-law careers simply to make ends meet, even if they are passionately committed to litigation.

Thirdly, the transition from junior to independent counsel is mainly driven by private networks, social capital, and the capacity to weather tough times. Chambers with better salaries or better fee-splitting deals are not easily available without good connections, and it may take years to develop a personal practice—years that many cannot spare without financial savings or family

assistance. Cumulatively, this leads to a structural bias: individuals from less advantaged backgrounds are more likely to leave litigation at each juncture. This leads to a self-selection mechanism that maintains socio-economic stratification at the highest levels of the Bar.

IMPACT ON ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND PROFESSIONAL DIVERSITY

Low stipends are not merely an internal professional concern, but cause socio-economic filtration; they explicitly affect access to fairness and justice. A Bar primarily drawn from wealthy, urban, English-speaking backgrounds is less likely to reflect the lived experience of litigants who belong to rural backgrounds, informal-sector workers, Dalit and Adivasi communities, religious and linguistic minorities and women facing multiple challenges. While compassion and allegiance can narrow this gap, representation and shared experience matter, specifically in areas such as labour law, social security, land dispute and criminal defence.

Furthermore, low remuneration discourages young lawyers from choosing or remaining in legal aid, rights-based practice and public interest litigation (PIL), which are generally less paying than commercial or corporate work. Commentary jottings that the early years at Bar- specifically when many young lawyers are open to right-based work- are also the greatest year of financial risk, and it's really sensible to choose better paying corporate and commercial jobs over unpaid or less pay trial work and legal aid. Later on, it can lead to starvation of young in the legal aid system and weaken the future of public law specialists, weakening the constitutional values that justice will not be denied just based on economic handicap.

The senior members of the Bar and the policymakers are now linking the stipends to the overall objective of democratising the Bar. In their public reactions to the recommendations made by the BCI, some of the senior members of the Bar have emphasised that minimum stipends are essential to ensure that first-generation lawyers and those who do not come from families of means can meaningfully engage with the litigation process. Otherwise, the Bar itself would become an area reserved only for those who can afford to make it a luxury profession.

EVALUATING BCI AND STATE RESPONSES

The BCI's 2024 circular and the corresponding state-level initiatives represent a step in the right direction, but the cons are also apparent. The circular is more of a guideline, which mentions the minimum stipend requirements and the fact that not all seniors or companies are equivalent, and there is room for flexibility for the firms/senior advocates contingent upon the

individual case. However, the fact that it doesn't necessarily lead to disciplinary action if not followed has been pointed out as a drawback, and young litigants may be reluctant to ask seniors who influence their future.

Secondly, even the proposed stipends of ₹20,000 in urban areas and ₹15,000 in rural areas are being questioned. Young lawyers in metropolitan cities such as Delhi and Mumbai are appreciative of the fact that their stipends are being recognised, but they feel that the amounts are inadequate to sustain the cost of living, particularly those who do not have access to support from their family, accommodation, or additional income. There is also an apprehension that experienced lawyers who are already paid higher remuneration may consider the BCI amounts as a ceiling, leading to a lowering of the pay.

Thirdly, the implementation framework remains nascent. The circular proposes grievance redressal procedure and supervision committees at State Bar Councils and seeks annual reports on the specific number of juniors being hired and the stipends they are paid. However, it offers little detail on verification, audits, or punishment. Without a robust emphasis upon transparency, such as requiring stipend amounts to be publicly listed in courts, conducting random audits, and Anti-retaliation safeguards, there is a jeopardy that the circular will be acclaimed more in non-compliance rather than adherence to the law.

State-sponsored schemes in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Jharkhand, which provide direct stipends or subsidies to junior advocates, are a sturdy model. They share the burden of sustaining junior advocates between the legal profession and the state. However, such schemes are generally limited in scope and budget, and their augmentation to other states is contingent on executive action and fiscal flexibility. The Bombay High Court's position that stipends cannot be made mandatory by courts "without law" underscores the need for a solution through legislation or law, rather than judicial encouragement alone.

TOWARDS A RIGHTS-BASED STIPEND FRAMEWORK: PROPOSALS FOR REFORM

To transform stipends from an act of kindness into a binding and enforceable element of a regulatory scaffolding, multifaceted plans to reform are required. The following proposals, based on contemporary advancements, seek to integrate regulatory requirements with institutional and financial support.

Statutory Recognition of Minimum Stipends: Parliament or the state legislature may implement specific legislation or amend the Advocates Act 1961 to recognise the right of junior advocates to a stipulated stipend during their initial years of practice. This stipend would be linked to indicators such as the cost of living and minimum wages. Laws established under this legislation must specify the duration (such as the first three or five years post-enrolment) and empower the bar council to impose compliance via disciplinary actions.

Similarly, regulations established under the legal education authority may stipulate that compulsory pre-enrolment internship, like the suggested twelve-month internship, must be compensated at or above the specified minimum wage levels. Expectations of this rule would be permitted only if the internship is part-time or if it is completed alongside institutional stipends or scholarships. This would guarantee that mandatory internships do not turn into another source of unpaid labour.

Bar- and State-Funded Junior Advocate Fellowships: Recognising that numerous senior attorneys, specifically those from rural regions and lower courts, might find it difficult to reach the minimum salary thresholds. In this regard, Bar Councils and State Governments could cooperate to flourish and implement fellowship programs designed to assist junior lawyers. There are already existing states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Jharkhand. There are programs which are already recognised, where government or Bar welfare funds provide a monthly financial endorsement to junior lawyers for a designated period; these schemes could be expanded further. Funding for this fellowship program could come from numerous sources, including a fee imposed in cases that are filed in higher courts, voluntary donations from affluent Bar Associations, Access to fairness, financing, and cooperation through corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Juniors who fulfil specific financial requirements and are dedicated to practising law may be eligible for direct stipends that are deposited into their bank accounts under these programs. Because this method would be distinct from chamber payments, top lawyers would have less work to do, and the system would be more accountable overall. In order to redress the long-standing historically disproportionate representation and to guarantee that the legal profession is more encompassing, the scheme can also give preference to women, first-generation attorneys, and candidates from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes.

Mandatory Paid Internships with Accreditation and Caps: Internships are a crucial component of entering litigation. It would be beneficial for the regulatory authority and the university to consider adopting a policy of mandating stipends for accredited full-time litigation internships exceeding a minimal period, such as four weeks. Chambers, interested in employing interns through properly accredited university programmes or BCI-approved initiatives, would be required to make public essential information, including the stipend amount, working hours and the nature of the work. This would be available to students, enabling them to make informed decisions.

To prevent “internship inflation,” which leads to chambers employing a large number of interns while offering them unreasonably low stipends, accreditation standards could establish a limit on the number of interns that any senior practitioner can supervise. Additionally, there may be a fundamental training program, assessment criteria, and certification requirements that must be adhered to.

Transparency, Monitoring and Grievance Redressal: Transparency in institutions would be essential for effective enforcement. For instance, the online register maintained by the Bar Councils could include the range of stipends offered to junior advocates and interns, the number of such opportunities available, as well as compliance with BCI/minima stipulations. Audits could be conducted either through a random process or through complaints received, with compliance being checked through documentary evidence such as bank statements.

A system for dealing with grievances must ensure that complainants do not suffer any reprisals. For instance, grievances with respect to non-payment or under-payment of stipulated minima could be addressed through a confidential process, with the power vested in the State Bar Council to conduct an inquiry and mete out appropriate sanctions ranging from a warning to suspension of welfare benefits, as well as chamber registrations for junior advocates. A role could be assigned to representatives from the group of young lawyers in the Bar Council as well as the Bar Association.

Court-Linked Clerkships and Institutional Pathways: Institutions can also contribute to supplementing the chamber-based stipend system by providing more paid opportunities for clerkships and research positions for law graduates and junior lawyers. Judicial clerkships at the Supreme Court, High Courts, etc., already offer a model of paid work opportunities for law graduates/junior lawyers. This model can also be extended to district courts, legal service

authorities, government litigation offices, etc. This will not only strengthen the legal profession but also offer paid opportunities for law graduates who want to make a career in litigation but cannot find sufficient stipends available. 6. Supportive Infrastructure: Hostels, Travel Allowances, and Training.

Supportive Infrastructure: Hostels, Travel Allowances and Training: Finally, the reform of the stipend system should also be integrated with the creation of supportive infrastructural measures. State Governments and Bar Councils can establish hostels at lower costs near the locations of the important court complexes for junior advocates, with rent depending on the income levels of the junior lawyers, and also offer travel allowances for juniors who commute long distances from the periphery to the courts where they have cases. Training programs for junior lawyers, offered through Bar Academies or law practice management centres, would also enable juniors to become independent lawyers more quickly, reducing the long period of dependence on stipends.

CONCLUSION

The low and inconsistent stipends for legal interns and junior advocates are not merely an employment conditions issue; they are core to the question of who can participate in, and influence, the litigation culture in India. The current system effectively requires would-be litigators to subsidise the early years of practice themselves, which can only be done by those who have sufficient socio-economic support to do so. This creates a self-selection bias that favours the already privileged, reduces the social scope of the bar, and compromises the potential of the legal system to serve a socio-economically diverse public.

The recent developments on the BCI's minimum stipend circular, state-level stipend schemes, High Court interventions, and the push for formalised internships suggest that there is an emerging institutional recognition of these systemic barriers to entry. However, without statutory support, these efforts may remain piecemeal and inspirational rather than transformative. A rights-based approach to stipend support, grounded in the state's constitutional obligations to equality, dignity, livelihood, and access to justice, is necessary to move beyond the charitable impulse.

Aligning stipend support with these constitutional values will not merely open up entry to the litigation culture to more would-be litigators; it will also enhance the legitimacy and potential of the justice system as a whole. A bar that reflects a more diverse socio-economic profile will

be better equipped to hear the voices of a diverse citizenry, to support public interest law and legal aid work, and to uphold the constitutional promise that justice shall not be influenced by wealth or status. In this sense, the issue of stipend support is not merely a welfare issue; it is core to the development of an inclusive, modern, and constitutionally faithful bar in India.

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