

*Our Founder Aparna Mittal and Samāna's launch was featured in this interview  
published by Bar & Bench in May 2018*

Aditya AK May 10, 2018 Law & Policy News, News

## Former AZB, Luthra Partner **Aparna Mittal** launches **Samāna Centre for Gender, Policy and Law**



NLSIU 2005 graduate and former partner at AZB & Partners **Aparna Mittal** has started a gender advisory and advocacy organization called *Samāna Centre for Gender, Policy and Law*.

Launched with a view to promoting gender mainstreaming in CSR and philanthropic activities, attaining the goal of gender equality at the workplace and across other fields, and taking up strategic legal and policy interventions in this area, Samāna offers an array of services.

Speaking to Bar & Bench, Mittal said,

*"Across many dimensions, whether it is education, healthcare, at the workplace, or otherwise you see that there are gender inequities that need to be addressed. It had always been at the back of my mind to work in this area; it is not something I could ignore anymore."*

<https://barandbench.com/former-azb-luthra-partner-aparna-mittal-launches-samana-centre-gender-policy-law/>

Mittal, who has experience of over twelve years in the corporate law/M&A arena, had resigned from AZB & Partners in September 2017. After taking a sabbatical to hash things out, she decided to launch Samāna. She says,

*“After twelve years of a very fulfilling corporate/M&A practice, I began to wonder whether my skillset as a lawyer can be used differently so as to contribute to public policy and social impact. So, I took a sabbatical because I needed to think through what I really wanted to do in this space. Internationally also, it is not uncommon for a lot of lawyers in this age bracket to move towards policy and governance. So, I decided to do some exploring and thinking through and then decided to set this up.”*

Samāna will focus on three key verticals which in turn have sub-categories. She says,

*“Firstly, I want to reintroduce and enhance the concept of gender mainstreaming. This is an international concept adopted by the United Nations which, simply put, says that in every initiative and policy, you must look at things from a gender perspective as well and aim to create equality.*

*There are a lot of companies and philanthropic organisations that are doing excellent work in India. So, I just thought that if there is a specific gender advisory which helps them to do gender mainstreaming at the project level, we will hopefully be able to make a difference.*

*Secondly, we have a Human Resource advisory vertical. This has two parts two it – one is what the law mandates, such as maternity benefits, creches, sexual harassment policies etc. Apart from that, there is a lot an employer ought to do, even though it is not legally mandated, to make workplaces progressive, inclusive, diverse and in touch with real life realities. This includes adopting flexible hours, removing unconscious bias etc. If you want to make your workplace better, the sky is the limit.*

*Thirdly, there is the law and policy vertical that will take up strategic interventions, studies etc in this area.*

*I am looking to advise corporates whether they be mid-level organisations or MNCs, government bodies, trade organisations, etc. to introduce these practices and policies.”*

Specific to the second vertical, as Mittal says, the objective of Samāna isn't limited to ensuring that the existing legal framework is followed.

*“The challenge is that a lot of people either don't know the law in this area or don't really want to follow it. If they are not even convinced on following the law, how do you convince them to do extra things beyond it to make workplaces better and at par with international best practices? I hope to make a difference by trying to change this mindset in some manner.*

*The idea eventually is to make gender a conscious point of focus when it comes to recruiting, hiring etc.”*

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