



Litigation vs Corporate Law in India

Career paths, daily work, skills, and how to choose — explained for Indian law students and professionals

Choosing between litigation and corporate law is one of the most important decisions an Indian law student or junior advocate will make. This guide breaks down both paths side by side — what the work involves in India, the skills required, career progression under the Bar Council of India framework, and how to decide which path suits you.

1. AT A GLANCE — SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

|  Litigation |  Corporate Law |
|--|--|
| Resolves disputes between parties before courts or tribunals | Facilitates transactions, deals, and business structuring |
| Adversarial — working against opposing counsel | Collaborative — working with clients and counterparties |
| Governed by CPC, CrPC, Evidence Act, and court rules | Governed by Companies Act 2013, SEBI, FEMA, and contract law |
| Work is reactive — triggered by a dispute or case | Work is proactive — driven by commercial opportunity |
| Practice in District Courts, High Courts, Supreme Court | Practice in law firms, in-house legal teams, and chambers |
| Heavy drafting of complaints, petitions, and written arguments | Heavy drafting of contracts, SHA, MoU, and transaction docs |
| Client contact can be emotionally charged and urgent | Client contact is commercial, strategic, and deal-focused |
| Independent practice common — own chamber | Firm-based practice common — structured hierarchy |

2. WHAT LITIGATORS DO IN INDIA — DAY TO DAY

- Draft complaints, written statements, petitions, and applications
- Conduct legal research on case law, statutes, and procedural rules
- Prepare briefs, synopses, and written submissions for hearings
- Appear before District Courts, High Courts, tribunals, or the Supreme Court
- Advise clients on litigation strategy, merits, and risks
- Attend case management hearings, arguments, and evidence recording
- Manage discovery and document production in civil matters
- Draft and respond to legal notices under various statutes
- Negotiate and document settlements, consent terms, and compromise decrees

Key Litigation Sub-Areas in India

- Civil litigation — contract disputes, property matters, recovery suits under CPC
- Criminal litigation — defence and prosecution under CrPC and IPC / BNS
- Constitutional law — writ petitions, PIL, and fundamental rights litigation
- Arbitration — domestic arbitration under the Arbitration and Conciliation Act 1996
- Intellectual Property — disputes before IP courts, IPAB successor tribunals
- Tax litigation — appeals before ITAT, High Courts, and Supreme Court
- Consumer and labour disputes — NCDRC, labour courts, and industrial tribunals



3. WHAT CORPORATE LAWYERS DO IN INDIA — DAY TO DAY

- Draft and negotiate transaction documents: SPAs, SHA, MoU, NDAs, and loan agreements
- Conduct due diligence on Indian target companies — legal, regulatory, and compliance review
- Advise on deal structure under Companies Act 2013, FEMA, and SEBI regulations
- Coordinate with tax, employment, IP, and real estate specialists
- Handle RBI and FEMA filings for foreign investment transactions
- Manage NCLT filings for mergers, demergers, and insolvency under IBC
- Draft board resolutions, minutes, and MCA/ROC filings
- Advise start-ups on incorporation, funding rounds, and ESOP structuring
- Advise listed companies on SEBI compliance, insider trading, and takeover code

Key Corporate Sub-Areas in India

- Mergers & Acquisitions — domestic and cross-border M&A under Companies Act and FEMA
- Private Equity & Venture Capital — fund investments, term sheets, SHA, and exits
- Banking & Finance — loan documentation, security creation, and debt restructuring
- Capital Markets — IPOs, QIPs, rights issues, and SEBI compliance
- Insolvency & Restructuring — IBC proceedings before NCLT and NCLAT
- Start-up & Tech Law — incorporation, funding, data protection, and IT Act compliance
- Foreign Investment — FDI, ODI, FEMA advisory, and RBI approvals

4. SKILLS COMPARISON

|  Litigation Skills |  Corporate Skills |
|---|---|
| Legal research and case law analysis | Commercial and deal-structuring thinking |
| Strong written drafting — petitions and arguments | Precise contract drafting and negotiation |
| Procedural knowledge — CPC, CrPC, Evidence Act | Regulatory knowledge — Companies Act, FEMA, SEBI |
| Oral advocacy and courtroom presence | Transaction management and project coordination |

| | |
|--|--|
| Composure under adversarial pressure | Stamina through long deal timelines and late closings |
| Strategic thinking on dispute resolution | Understanding of corporate finance, valuations, and deal terms |
| Client management during stressful proceedings | Relationship-building with promoters, bankers, and investors |

5. CAREER PROGRESSION IN INDIA – BOTH PATHS

Litigation Career Path in India

LLB / LLM Graduate + BCI Enrolment

Enrol with State Bar Council under Bar Council of India rules — mandatory before practice

Junior / Pupil Advocate (0–3 yrs)

Work under a senior advocate: assist in drafting, attend court, observe proceedings, manage files

Independent Advocate (3–7 yrs)

Appear independently in District Courts and lower tribunals, build your own client base

Established Advocate (7–12 yrs)

Regular appearances in High Court, develop a specialism, take on your own juniors

Senior Advocate / Designated Senior

Designated by High Court or Supreme Court — argue complex and constitutional matters

Alternative Exits

Judicial services (HJS / HCS exam), in-house legal counsel, law officer in PSU or government, academia, ADR / arbitrator

Corporate Law Career Path in India

LLB / LLM Graduate + BCI Enrolment

Join a Tier 1, Tier 2, or boutique law firm in Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, or Hyderabad

Associate (0–3 yrs)

Run due diligence workstreams, draft ancillary documents, manage CP checklists, coordinate filings

Senior Associate (3–6 yrs)

Lead deal execution, draft and negotiate transaction documents, manage junior associates

Principal Associate / Senior Principal (6–9 yrs)

Run major transactions, manage client relationships, supervise teams, contribute to pitches



Partner

Originate mandates, lead client accounts, head practice groups, drive firm revenue

Alternative Exits

In-house General Counsel or legal team at MNC, start-up, or listed company; investment banking; private equity; SEBI / RBI legal roles

6. SALARY BENCHMARKS — INDIA (APPROXIMATE, ANNUAL)

|  Litigation |  Corporate Law |
|--|--|
| Junior under senior: ₹0–₹3 LPA (stipend / no pay common) | Associate (Tier 1 firm, Mumbai/Delhi): ₹12–₹18 LPA |
| Independent junior advocate: ₹2–₹8 LPA | Associate (Tier 2 / boutique): ₹6–₹12 LPA |
| Established advocate (HC level): ₹10–₹30 LPA | Senior Associate: ₹18–₹35 LPA |
| Senior HC / Supreme Court counsel: ₹30–₹1 Cr+ LPA | Principal Associate: ₹35–₹60 LPA |
| Designated Senior Advocate: ₹1 Cr–₹10 Cr+ annually | Equity Partner: ₹60 LPA–₹2 Cr+ depending on firm |

Salary Note for India

- Litigation income is highly variable — juniors often earn nothing for years; top senior advocates earn crores
- Tier 1 firms (AZB, Cyril Amarchand, Shardul, JSA, Trilegal) pay the highest corporate salaries in India
- In-house legal roles at MNCs and listed companies typically offer ₹15–₹50 LPA with better work-life balance
- LPA = Lakhs Per Annum. Figures are indicative and vary by city, firm, and experience

7. WHICH PATH IS RIGHT FOR YOU? — SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Tick the statements that apply to you:

You may suit LITIGATION if you:

- Enjoy argument, debate, and persuading others in court
- Are drawn to advocacy — oral and written — before judges
- Want the independence of building your own practice and client base
- Are energised by competition and the unpredictability of court proceedings
- Are interested in constitutional law, criminal law, or PIL
- Are comfortable with a slow start financially in exchange for long-term independence

You may suit CORPORATE LAW if you:

- Are interested in business, finance, start-ups, and commercial transactions
- Enjoy detailed drafting, contract negotiation, and regulatory compliance
- Want a structured salary and career progression from day one
- Are comfortable working in large deal teams with tight deadlines
- Want to work with MNCs, PE funds, investment banks, or listed companies
- Are interested in areas like M&A, FEMA, IBC, SEBI, or start-up law

Decision Tip for Indian Law Students

- Intern at both a litigation chamber and a law firm before deciding — classroom impressions are often wrong
- Top NLU graduates have strong access to Tier 1 firms; traditional university graduates often begin with litigation
- Many successful Indian lawyers switch paths in their early years — your first choice is not permanent
- Consider the city: Mumbai and Delhi dominate corporate law; High Court bars are strong in Chennai, Kolkata, and Allahabad

Continue Your Legal Journey with LawMento

Scan any QR code below to explore courses, free resources and our community



Explore Our Courses

Practical expert-led legal courses designed for students and professionals.



Explore Our Bundles

Curated course bundles—more learning, better value for your career.



Explore Masterclasses

Deep-dive sessions by industry experts on high-demand legal topics.



Explore E-books

In-depth e-books on career paths, law practice areas and more.



Free Resources

Templates, guides and PDFs — completely free for our community.



Free Checklists

Ready-to-use legal checklists covering key practice areas.



Career Guide

Step-by-step career roadmaps for law students and young lawyers.



Follow on Instagram

Daily legal updates, tips, and career content — follow @lawmento.official



Connect on LinkedIn

Legal insights and professional updates — follow LawMento.



Join WhatsApp Community

Get daily legal insights for FREE.

LawMento.com | Practical Legal Education for Students & Professionals

lawmento.com

Practical legal resources for Indian law students, advocates, and legal professionals.