



ONE TO ONE

Keith Vaz MP with

Rajita Sharma

Rajita Sharma, a partner at Finers Stephens Innocent, specialises in all areas of intellectual property law, with extensive experience of complex litigation and commercial transactions. She represents companies and individuals, in the life sciences, consumer and luxury goods, and shipping sectors. Being qualified in England and India, she provides cross border advice and has managed multi-jurisdictional matters in various countries including the USA, Australia and India.

Her litigation practice includes matters of infringement, validity and oppositions in the areas of biotechnology, medical equipment, drug formulations, consumer products, multi hull ships and software. She has worked on HIV and cancer drugs, proteins, immunology and antiviral therapies. She also advises on IP aspects of corporate transactions and commercial arrangements, technology transfer, collaborations, sponsorship and licences. She assists businesses to devise strategies for the procurement, exploitation and enforcement of IP rights and IP asset management. She is recommended in the Legal 500.



1. What inspired you to begin your career in your chosen field?

Initially it was a process of elimination rather than an event or moment of inspiration. I grew up in Mumbai, India. My parents wanted me to study medicine, I did not and as a way of avoiding that and marriage, chose to study law.

In India, in the early 1990s, practice of law was not the most attractive career choice. After a year of travel in North America and Mexico, I got married and settled to be a house wife/ mother with no ambitions at all. I moved to the UK 1989 and had an opportunity to do a pupillage in the Chambers of Sir Robin Jacob (now a retired CA judge) which

is a leading intellectual property law set.

His Honour Michael Fysh QC (retired Patents County Court judge) mentored and taught me. The manner in which he did this and the quality of work that he introduced me to inspired me to make law a career. It excited me that I was suited to law, especially intellectual property law.

2. What are your proudest achievements?

Numerous small ones. Professionally, being called to the bar on the basis of my Indian qualifications; becoming a partner in a major law firm in 2001, a rare thing then for an Asian woman; successfully representing Mother Teresa in a copyright matter and

successfully defending a £64 million claim through mediation.

On a personal level, completing the trek to the Himalayan Base Camp and spending four months on a fishing boat in Alaska and Yukon. Above all, my daughter who has grasped all the wonderful opportunities in this country and its education system and now is training to be a surgeon.

3. Please tell us about your current position?

I am a partner in the firm Finers Stephens Innocent in London. My area of practice is intellectual property law which covers intangible rights such as inventions, patents, brands, design rights and copyrights.

4. What has been the biggest obstacle in your career?

The obstacles have been largely advantages as well. Undoubtedly I have met with sex, race and single mother issues. On occasions I have lost work because the client did not feel confident with a woman or have missed out on opportunities because I was not "one of the boys".

However, most of the time being who I am has been a huge advantage. I have stood out and been able to attract the best work and the best clients who have stayed with me year after year. The only criteria has been the quality of my work, focus and hard work. I have succeeded wholly on merits.

Apart from that, any obstacles have been my own preconceived notions and limitations. When I chose to practice law in the UK, I was advised that

coming from India and as an Indian qualified lawyer and a woman at that, there was no way that I would be able to find a job in any major law firm. I believed that and considered alternatives. But then I reconsidered and decided that I would do nothing other than practice law. Once I was determined, everything fell into place.

5. Who has been the biggest influence on your career to date?

Again it has not been just a single person, Michael Fysh QC, my first pupil master. He has a great love for India and all things Indian. Mary Vitoria QC, a leading IP barrister and author. She is a great role model of how a woman and femininity can be extremely successful in man's world. The late Sir Hugh Laddie (a CA judge) who had the ability to explain the most complex issues in a simple language which is the most important attribute of a good lawyer.

6. What is the best thing about your current role?

15. It has to be the variety of my work and the freedom to develop my practice in the direction I desire. As a practitioner of intellectual property law on any single day, I could be looking at a drug formulation, the insides of a catamaran, advising on branding strategies or reviewing complex technology in order to advise the client whether they should invest millions into it. I could be preparing for a litigation, negotiating settlements or arguing over a minute point of contract. My work is also international with a focus on the USA and India, which adds to the

variety and diversity.

7. And the worst?

Typical of every lawyer, it has to be administrative tasks, managing papers, time sheets and organisation.

8. What are your long term goals?

To build a premium cross border practice across UK and India. And to find an academic role.

9. If you were Prime Minister, what one thing would you change?

If I could, I would rewind and erase the Iraq war and the mess in Afghanistan. On a more practical level, I would provide more facilities and benefits to working mothers including flexible working hours. In the area of law I would convince the Indian government to allow foreign law firms to set up offices in India and to change the way the Indian Patent offices and Courts are currently interpreting the patent law mainly against the innovative pharmaceutical companies.

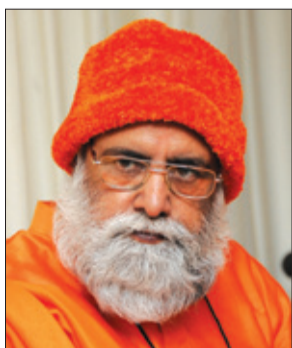
10. If you were marooned on a desert island, which historical figures would you like to spend your time with and why?

Oh so many, Winston Churchill for the witty conversations; Robert Frost for poetry; Napoleon Bonaparte, to discuss the veracity of his collaboration with Tipu Sultan against the East India Company; Akbar, the Mughal Emperor, to hear the story of his life and for discourses on multi religion societies, spiritualism and Sufism; Elvis Presley and Edith Piaf for the music and although he is still alive, Mehdi Hassan, the great urdu gazal singer.

HH Brahmurishi Shree Kumar Swamiji honoured at the Houses of Parliament

The Houses of Parliament in UK, played host to one of India's greatest spiritual leaders, as His Holiness Brahmurishi Shree Kumar Swamiji, was honoured by politicians, campaigners and his peers in recognition of his outstanding contribution, dedication and service in improving human welfare across the World, through his message of interfaith harmony, equality and brotherhood for people of all faiths.

The reception, which included over 180 invited dignitaries, was hosted by the Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP, Labour MP for East Ham and organised and compared by Sanjay Jagatia and Muna Chauhan. Special guests who all paid tribute to His Holiness with personal messages of wel-



HH Brahmurishi Shree Kumar Swamiji addressing the audience



Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP who hosted the event

come included: Barry Gardiner MP; Steven Pound MP; Gareth Thomas MP; Bob Blackman MP, Alok Sharma MP; Lord Bilimoria; Lord Tarsem King of West Bromwich; Virendra Sharma MP and Navin Shah from the London Assembly, together with representatives from different faith

organisations.

During the reception, His Holiness was presented with citations and Awards from various organisations for the Humanitarian work that he is doing, including: The highly acclaimed "Ambassador of Peace Award" by the Universal Peace Federation, "The Mahaveer Award" by The Young Indian

Vegetarians Society in recognition of His Holiness' vegetarian lifestyle and compassion towards all living beings and "The Humanitarian Award" to both Gurudevji and Gurumaa by the Asian Welfare Association, which is presented to one individual each year for their outstanding contribution to social welfare and being a role model to others.

On receiving his awards and citations His Holiness said: "This honor is not just for me, but for the whole world and the ancient tradition of the East. More than that, this honour is for all the faithful believers of all the World religions such as Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, and Zoroastrianism. This his-

torical honour is not for a single person but for all the Nations and their various cultures. This honour in fact is an honour for the entire humanity. This felicitation has once more brought the greatness and humility of Great Britain before the whole World."

Commenting on the event and his meeting with His Holiness, Stephen Timms MP commented: "Faith organisations across the country are making a positive contribution in communities across the UK, and I welcome the opportunity this event presents to bring them together. I am glad to have been able to help to sponsor it. It has been a pleasure to meet with His Holiness and learn more about the valuable impact of his humanitarian work."

People

■ KPMGs Diwali Party, established over 8 years ago, has now become a Festival of Asian culture and tradition. Hosted by its Senior Partner John Griffith Jones it was organised by the outstanding Nina Amin. An "A" list crowd included Yogi Mehta, Rami Ranger MBE, CB Patel, GP Hinduja, Ranjit Mathrani, Shashi Vekaria, and many more.

■ Two Queens met at Buckingham Palace this week. The Queen of England presented the Queen of Curry Namita Panjabi with her MBE. Who knows if they exchanged tips on cooking.

■ Beware of the deadly combination of Lord Kamlesh Patel and Lord Gulam Noon. Both spoke on the NHS and the vote was won by 12.