

Indian-born Lawyer Making His Mark in America's Legal Industry

Benson Varghese attributes his success and entrepreneurial spirit, in part, to his teenage years on a hardscrabble rubber plantation in a tiny village in southern India

[Arif Bhatt](#) Feb 13, 2023

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Handout

Benson Varghese

At age 40, Benson Varghese has amassed an impressive collection of achievements. The Indian-born lawyer is the founder and managing partner of Varghese Summersett, one of the largest and fastest-growing criminal defense and family law practices in north Texas.

He's also launching a new case management software for law firms called Lawft, which is expected to transform the way attorneys conduct the business of law.

Varghese attributes his success and entrepreneurial spirit, in part, to his teenage years on a hardscrabble rubber plantation in a tiny village in southern India.

"Tough times, closed doors, and a whole lot of rejections helped me get where I am today," Varghese said. "Instead of letting setbacks define me, they drove me to work harder. Circumstances forced me to find my own way and develop a unique perspective, one that allows me to see possibilities where others sometimes see roadblocks."

Varghese was born in Kerala, in a beautiful but small village in southern India. He was the second of three children, and the only son, to Varghese Mathai and Rachel Varghese.

When Varghese was a toddler, his family moved to the US after his mother accepted a job as a nurse in Dallas, Texas.

"At the time, America needed nurses, so that created a pathway for us to go over," he said. "And, of course, my parents wanted us to have better opportunities than what was available in Kerala."

But by the time Varghese was in middle school, his parents saw a need for him to return to India.

"Let's just say I was a bit of a wayward youth," Varghese said. "I started getting into school yard dust-ups and fist-fights. My parents decided it might be best if I went back to India. The plan, initially, was for me to go to boarding school. Fortunately for me, that plan quickly changed to me living and working on a rubber plantation that my dad had purchased years earlier."

So, in the 6th grade, Varghese found himself on a plane bound for India.

"It was only the second time I had been back to India," Varghese said. "I had gone back once before for my uncle's wedding, when I was like 6 or 7, but that was a relatively short trip. And, of course, I didn't speak the language."

"I was literally thrown into the deep end of a new country, culture, language and way of life."

Running the plantation in India

Kerala—which means "land of coconuts"—is a beautiful place. They call it God's country. It's a tropical state full of rolling hills, rivers, waterfalls and lush vegetation. The land is rich and perfect for coconut, banana and rubber trees. Rubber production was the mainstay of the economy at the time.

A few years earlier, Varghese's father had purchased a rubber plantation, which his grandfather was running while the family was living and working in the US.

"It was my dad's dream home," Varghese said. "He used to walk by it on his way to school when he was a kid, so once he was able to afford it, he bought it. He was planning on retiring there some day."

Sending Varghese back to India was, in part, an effort to give the young man some much-needed discipline. But it was also an opportunity for him to get to know his extended family, and most importantly, understand the culture he was from.

It was also a way for Varghese's father to keep an eye on his investment: that is, if Varghese didn't run it into the ground first.

"I learned to run the rubber plantation the hard way, by making every mistake possible," Varghese said, laughing. "You name it, I screwed it up."

Varghese was eventually responsible for all aspects of the plantation - from hiring seasonal employees, to managing finances, to ensuring that the trees were tapped properly and pressed into usable materials.

"It sounds like a lot of responsibility for a teenager and it was," Varghese said. "And while being in a small village meant I was living in a somewhat by-gone era, it also meant everyone knew each other, and you really couldn't get into too much trouble."

Despite the abundance of natural resources - or perhaps, because of it - Kerala seemed as though it was largely unaffected by the progress of the rest of the world. The power went out on a daily basis. Water was drawn from a well. Hot meals meant chopping firewood. There were no computers in the village and the internet was unheard of.

"I remember occasionally being able to tune into BBC World Radio on the FM band," Varghese said.

And then, there were the monsoons.

For three months out of the year, dark clouds covered the sky as torrential rain fell and seemingly never ended.

"The rain was relentless," Varghese said. "Over time, of course, I learned to understand and appreciate that these downpours brought the parched land to life and prepared it for seeds that farmers sow in the spring."

Varghese describes his time in India as the monsoon season of his life.

"In that remote corner of the world, I was forced to grow up and become a man," Varghese said. "Although it seemed foreign and even dark at times, it prepared me for my future - a future that would not have been possible but for my time on that rubber plantation in a tiny village in Southern India."

"I was ready for bigger things."

Returning to the US to fulfill the American dream

Once Varghese turned 18, he sought US citizenship and returned to Dallas to pursue higher education. He quickly obtained his GED and was accepted at the Cox School of Business at Southern Methodist University.

During this time, his father asked him about his long term plans. He was hoping that his son would become a lawyer, a dream that the elder Varghese had been unable to fulfill himself.

"I asked him if he was going to pursue his law degree, and he didn't reply to that," Varghese Mathai said. "He wanted to be a businessman."

Varghese graduated SMU with honors with a business degree and set his sights on obtaining a master's degree in business. To his father's chagrin, it didn't seem as though Varghese had any intention of going to law school.

And then, Varghese changed course - a decision that also changed the trajectory of his life.

Varghese gained admission to Texas Tech University School of Law in Lubbock, where he graduated in 2009 with a Juris Doctor.

A law degree in hand, Varghese set out to make his mark on the world. He got a job as a prosecutor at the Tarrant County District Attorney's Office - a career he thought would carry him the rest of his life.

"I truly enjoyed the work and thought I would always wear the white hat," he said.

As a young attorney, Varghese prosecuted a lot of misdemeanor crimes, such as shoplifting, fights and driving drunk. He longed for the day when he would be assigned bigger, more serious cases.

But at the time, there was very little room for advancement, as Varghese was

one of the youngest prosecutors in the office and no one was retiring or leaving.

"I decided to leave and go into private practice, where I could have more control over my career and tap into my entrepreneurial spirit."

Varghese Summersett is born

In 2014, Varghese left his job as a prosecutor to launch a criminal defense firm in Fort Worth. He hung his shingle in a 10 x 15 office using \$9,000 in seed money that he borrowed from his uncle.

A short time later, Anna Summersett - his law partner at the Tarrant County District Attorney's Office and *future wife* - joined him.

Varghese Summerestt was born.

Within three years of the firm's inception, [Varghese Summersett](#) attracted the best and brightest attorneys in North Texas and grew exponentially. The firm moved into a gorgeous, 8,500 square feet of space overlooking downtown Fort Worth.

The following year, the firm was recognized as the 782nd fastest growing business in the United States by *Inc. 5000 Magazine*. The year after that, Varghese Summersestt was named the sixth fastest growing company in Fort Worth.

More awards and honors followed. Today, Varghese Summersett has more 5-star Google reviews than any other defense practice in Texas - an accolade for which Varghese is most proud.

"Our growth and success are a direct result of our commitment to excellence," Varghese said. "I am so proud of what we have built and the

team we have assembled."

With the criminal business thriving, the firm has now branched into family law. [Varghese Summersett Family Law Group](#) handles divorce, child custody disputes, asset division, and other emotionally-charged family law matters.

And last month, the criminal division opened up another office in nearby Dallas.

Today, the firm employs about 20 team members, including attorneys, paralegals and support staff. And they are just getting started.

"I am excited to see what the future holds for Varghese Summersett," Varghese said. "We are poised for continued growth and success."

And new adventures.

Varghese has spent the last year designing and developing a new case management software system called Lawft, which will offer law firms tools to more effectively communicate with clients, manage caseloads, and grow their practices.

"We hope to launch later this year," Varghese said. "It will be a game changer for the legal industry. There's so much that technology can do - and we as a profession, have been behind almost every other industry. We're going to change that. I expect Lawft will have two key impacts. The first is unprecedented law firm growth. The second is improving access to justice."

He is also working on a book that he hopes to have published in 2023.

"It's about seeing every closed door as an opportunity," he said. "It also lays out how to build and grow a thriving law practice."

Varghese attributes his success to many of the values he learned as a teenager while living on the plantation. His accomplishments are a testament to his hard work, courage, generosity, and dogged determination.

"I learned just as much about business on that plantation as I did at one of the nation's top business schools," he said, referring to his undergraduate degree from SMU.

He plans to take his three sons back to the plantation when they get a bit older. His parents retired there, and he wants his boys to see what his formative years were like.

"I want them to see where I came from," Varghese said. "Those years shaped me into who I am today. And I want them to know that anything is possible if you work hard, bet on yourself, and never give up on what is important to you."