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# Access to Justice through Lok Adalats: An Efficiency Analysis of Dispute Resolution Mechanisms

## Article History:

### Name of Author:

Ankita Kaushik<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Leena Chhabra<sup>2</sup>

### Affiliation:

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, School of Law, GD Goenka University, Gurugram, Haryana-India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, School of Law, GD Goenka University, Gurugram, Haryana-India.

### Corresponding Author:

Mohit Mathur

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**Abstract:** The increasing backlog of cases in conventional courts has necessitated the development of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms to deliver timely justice. Amicable settlement of disputes is very much essential for the maintenance of social peace and harmony in the society. This research paper investigates the effectiveness of Lok Adalats in resolving disputes in India, focusing on their impact, challenges, and potential improvements. Established to address the significant backlog of cases in the Indian judicial system, Lok Adalats aim to provide a timely, cost-effective, and informal alternative to traditional court proceedings. General findings indicate that Lok Adalats are generally perceived as effective, with high levels of satisfaction reported by participants. However, issues such as lack of public awareness and variability in the quality of outcomes pose challenges. Recommendations include enhancing public outreach, standardizing mediation practices, and integrating technology to improve the efficiency and accessibility of Lok Adalats. This paper highlights the significant role of Lok Adalats in the Indian legal system and suggests pathways for enhancing their effectiveness in delivering justice. Article 39A of the Indian Constitution requires equal justice and free legal assistance. The necessity of the Lok Adalat System, an efficient institution of a people-friendly judicial system that administers prompt justice in an economical and cordial manner, has been highlighted by various Law Commission Reports, the Justice Malimath Committee Report, the Amendment of Civil Procedure Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, and the Legal Services Authority Act, 1987. Lok Adalat plays a critical role in promoting and strengthening "equal access to justice," which is central to India's constitution. A large number of Lok Adalats are being organized to achieve the Gandhian principle of Gram Swaraj and "access to justice for all."

**Keywords:** Lok Adalats, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Informal Justice, Indian Legal System, Access to Justice.

## INTRODUCTION

The need for alternative dispute resolution procedures has grown in India's varied and intricate legal system, where millions of cases are still pending. Among these mechanisms, Lok Adalats, or "People's Courts," serve as a crucial tool for alleviating case backlogs and delivering expedited justice. Lok Adalats, recognized as a method of informal dispute resolution, are a crucial component of India's legal framework, reflecting the principles of accessibility, affordability, and efficiency in the administration of justice. Lok Adalats have their origins in the ancient Indian tradition of Panchayats, where disputes were resolved at the village level through mediation and conciliation.

The contemporary institutionalization of Lok Adalats commenced in the early 1980s with the enactment of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. This legislation established Lok Adalats under the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), intending to offer a platform for amicable dispute resolution outside the formal court system. The primary aim of Lok Adalats is to reduce the strain on conventional courts by providing an alternative venue for dispute resolution. They function on the principle of voluntary resolution, wherein disputing parties consent to address their conflicts through mediation and conciliation instead of litigation. The procedure is intended to be informal, economical, and expeditious, rendering it

accessible to the general populace.

A key indicator of Lok Adalats' effectiveness is their ability to expeditiously resolve disputes. Due to the substantial backlog of cases in the Indian judicial system, Lok Adalats provide a means to reduce the burden on the courts. Data demonstrates that Lok Adalats have effectively resolved a substantial volume of cases each year. Reports from the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) indicate that Lok Adalats have adjudicated millions of cases since their establishment, emphasizing their function in alleviating the burden on the judicial system. Moreover, Lok Adalats facilitate the diminishment of litigation expenses. Conventional judicial processes frequently entail substantial legal expenses, procedural intricacies, and protracted delays. Lok Adalats allow parties to settle disputes cheaply. Informally conducted proceedings reduce the need for legal representation, further lowering costs. Strengthening Lok Adalat member training and support can improve dispute resolution and ensure consistency.<sup>1</sup>

The relevance and efficacy of Lok Adalats can also be increased by broadening their purview to cover a greater variety of disputes, such as those involving intricate business or environmental issues. Furthermore, integrating technology into the Lok Adalat process, such as online dispute resolution platforms, can make the system more accessible and efficient. Lok Adalats have highlighted their capacity to alleviate case backlogs and deliver accessible justice by prioritizing expediency, cost-efficiency, and amicable resolutions. As India advances its judicial system, Lok Adalats present a promising mechanism for improving the efficiency and efficacy of dispute resolution, thereby fostering a more accessible and equitable justice system.

### Alternative Dispute Resolution Methods

Equality underpins all contemporary legal frameworks and the administration of justice. If an individual cannot access a court to seek redress for grievances or defend against criminal accusations, justice becomes inequitable, and the laws intended for protection lose their significance, thereby failing in their intended purpose.<sup>2</sup> Alternative dispute resolution includes arbitration, mediation, conciliation, and other methods, excluding formal litigation, for resolving conflicts. Alternative dispute resolution presents numerous benefits compared to litigation. It is less contentious and, in certain instances, may be more expedient and economical. It may also alleviate court workloads. Consequently, its utilization is being advocated by judicial reformers in numerous developing and transitional economies.<sup>3</sup> In adopting an alternative dispute resolution model, it is essential to ensure an equilibrium of power between the disputing parties. Therefore, an effective dispute resolution method should minimize the advantages conferred by wealth and material possessions. Moreover, an effective alternative dispute resolution mechanism must meet the rigorous criteria of aligning with all the categories in the power spectrum as articulated by Professor Julius Stone.<sup>4</sup>

ADR today is divided into two categories: court-annexed options and community-based dispute resolution mechanisms.<sup>5</sup> Court-annexed ADR includes mediation/conciliation—the classic method where a neutral third party assists disputants in reaching a mutually acceptable solution—as well as variations of early neutral evaluation, a summary jury trial, a mini-trial, and other techniques. Supporters argue that such methods decrease the cost and time of litigation, improving access to justice and reducing court backlog, while at the same time preserving important social relationships for disputants.

Certain definitions of ADR encompass commercial arbitration, which involves

influence band, interest affected band, head count band and time count band.

<sup>5</sup> Community-based ADR is often designed to be independent of a formal court system that may be biased, expensive, distant, or otherwise inaccessible to a population. New initiatives sometimes build on traditional models of popular justice that relied on elders, religious leaders, or other community figures to help resolve conflict. India embraced Lok Adalat village-level people's courts in the 1980s, where trained mediators sought to resolve common problems that in an earlier period may have gone to the panchayat, a council of village or caste elders.

<sup>1</sup> Singh, P. (2015). *Legal Aid and Lok Adalats: Enhancing Access to Justice in India*. New Delhi: Universal Law Publishing Co.

<sup>2</sup> Law Commission of India, 14th Report on *Reform of Judicial Administration*, at 587.

<sup>3</sup> Mnookin, Robert H., *Alternative Dispute Resolution*, in Peter Newman (ed.), *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics and the Law*. vol. 1, London: MacMillan Reference, 1998, at 236.

<sup>4</sup> Stone Julius, *Social Dimensions of Law and Justice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966. The bands are coercion band, ethical band,

private adversarial proceedings where a neutral third party renders a binding decision. In 1996, India implemented the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, derived from the 1985 UNCITRAL Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration, which renders an arbitral award legally binding and confers extensive rights to commercial entities opting for arbitration. Nonetheless, arbitration, previously regarded as an alternative to litigation, now suffers from analogous issues of expense, postponement, intricacy, and reliance on legal counsel.<sup>6</sup>

### Negotiation

One substitute for official dispute resolution procedures is negotiation. Through negotiation, disagreements can be resolved by talking with the other parties or by having a conversation with the parties' representatives. The parties to a dispute can, on their own motion, start a process of negotiations through correspondence or through one or two mediators with a view to finding a mutually acceptable solution to the problems.<sup>7</sup>

Negotiation, by definition, does not include an authority that has the duty or the right to apply a specific rule to the issue at hand. The bargaining power of the parties often determines how negotiations go. Often, extraneous terms like keeping good relations with the other party lead to giving up legal rights. Negotiations save time, which is good for the process of negotiation.

### Mediation

Through the process of mediation, disputing parties enlist the aid of an impartial third party to serve as a mediator. The mediator is a facilitator who, in certain mediation models, may also offer a non-binding assessment of the disputes' merits if necessary but who is not authorized to render any legally binding decisions. The parties are free to evaluate the law and the facts, even if they disagree on what is law, fact, or important, and to walk away without making a decision if either of them does not like the deal offered.<sup>8</sup>

Both in negotiation and mediation, parties are free to waive their rights. Such a waiver is against the

mandate of the Constitution. The Supreme Court in *Basheshwar Nath v. Commissioner of Income Tax*<sup>9</sup> and in *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation*<sup>10</sup> has authoritatively pronounced that there could be no waiver of right conferred by Article 14 of the Constitution of India. Thus, the process of negotiation and mediation does not fit the constitutional scheme.

### Lok Adalat

The term "Lok Adalat" refers to a forum that is defined as a place where conciliatory and pervasive efforts are made with the intention of bringing about the settlement of disputes between the parties involved.<sup>11</sup> The Legal Services Authority Act of 1987 establishes Lok Adalats. Lok Adalats are an enhanced form of conciliation in which judges assist the parties involved, with the primary goal of avoiding excessive delays in formal adjudication processes and reducing the backlog of pending cases. One of the lacunae in the present form of Lok Adalats is that a case can be taken to Lok Adalat

only when the petitioner/claimant wants the same, thus it takes a form of conciliatory approach. Moreover, in Lok Adalats there is no *restitutio integrum*. As mentioned above, conciliations are against the constitutional mandate.

### Ombudsman

An institution of the public sector, the Ombudsman was ideally founded by the legislative branch of government to oversee the executive branch's administrative operations. The traditional ombudsman has the authority to look into complaints from people who believe that the government's administrative operations are being carried out in an unlawful or unfair way, determine whether or not wrongdoing has occurred based on the findings of the investigations, and offer suggestions for improvement if improper administrative conduct is discovered. It is not uncommon for the ombudsman to lack the authority to issue legally enforceable rulings. Instead, the ombudsman tries to change administrative behavior by using persuasive arguments to get the recommendations implemented. Also, the ombudsman might be able to suggest new rules and regulations. Furthermore, the ombudsman has the authority to bring attention

<sup>6</sup> Brooker, P., —The Juridification of Alternative Dispute Resolution, 28 *Anglo-American Law Review* 1, 1999, at 28.

<sup>7</sup> Singh, A., *Law of Arbitration and Conciliation*, Lucknow, Eastern Book Co., 2009, at 345.

<sup>8</sup> Rao, P. C. and Sheffield, W., *Alternative Dispute Resolution, What it is and how it works*, Delhi, Universal Law Publishing Co., 1997, at 211.

<sup>9</sup> AIR 1959 SC 149.

<sup>10</sup> (1985)3 SCC 545.

<sup>11</sup> Rao, P. B. S., —Establishment of Permanent Lok Adalats- A ban or boon? *Indian Bar Review*, vol xxx1, 2003, at 53.

to problematic administrative activity through the medium of annual and occasionally special reports submitted to the legislature.<sup>12</sup>

Lokpal, the central government's office of ombudsman, has not yet been established. While the Lokayukta (the office of ombudsman) has begun operations in a few states, it is still in its infancy and lacks the authority that would allow it to fully carry out its duties.<sup>13</sup> It has not yet been determined whether or not the office of the Ombudsman in India is effective. The fact that India has not investigated this possibility in the truest sense means that it will be too soon to comment on whether or not it is constitutional. On the other hand, if the Ombudsman is able to assume the role of an authority within the framework of the inquisitorial system, it may prove to be beneficial.

### Nyaya Panchayat

There is an effort being made in India to bring justice closer to the people through the use of Nyaya Panchayats. It is a continuation of the panchayat systems that were common in India prior to the influence of the British government. It is possible to interpret Nyaya panchayats as a manifestation of the state's compliance with Article 50 of the Constitution of India, which mandates that the state take measures to establish a separation between the executive branch and the judicial branch. In most cases, a Nyaya Panchayat is responsible for a region that encompasses seven to ten villages and has a population of more than fourteen thousand to fifteen thousand people. It is a body that is elected by the Gram Panchayat, which is also an elected body.

The essential features of the adjudication procedure of Nyaya Panchayats are

- Procedures that are easy to understand and operate;
- All proceedings must adhere to the principles of natural justice, regardless of any other technical procedural rules;
- Evidence and limitation laws are not final;

- Either verbal or written complaints are acceptable;
- Although parties may be represented by agents in certain civil matters, no legal representation is permitted;
- When it comes time to make a decision, the parties are asked to step aside. The Panchas then discuss the matter amongst themselves and make a pronouncement in front of the court.
- After a written judgment has been read aloud in open court, the parties are asked to sign it, which signifies that they have been informed of the judgment. Witnesses, if any, are examined on oath or solemn affirmation<sup>14</sup>.

Depersonalization of power appears to stem from the observed psychological fact that an individual's willingness to submit to authority is increased by awareness of similar submission by others and decreased by awareness of their resistance. As a result, the majority of people's refusal to submit to the Nyaya Panchayat's decision will reduce the likelihood of others doing the same. Then there will be no depersonalized power either.

### Lok-Adalat in India

Article 39-A, which was added to the Constitution of 1976 with the 42nd Amendment Act, mandates that the State ensure that the legal system operates in a way that promotes justice on the basis of equal opportunity. In particular, the State must provide free legal aid through appropriate laws, programs, or other means to guarantee that no citizen is denied the opportunity to obtain justice because of financial or other disabilities. Justice promotion was the driving force behind the creation and development of Lok Adalat. Social, economic, and political aspects all contribute to the meaning of justice. Having "access to justice" implies being able to take part in the legal system. It is that human right that covers not only bare court entry but also has many dimensions, including time-consuming factor<sup>15</sup>.

A "forum where voluntary effort aims at bringing about settlement of disputes between the parties is

<sup>12</sup> Reif, L. C., *The International Ombudsman Anthology*, London, Kluwer Law International.

<sup>13</sup> Bhatt, J. N.,—Ombudsman- An effective ADR? | *AIR 2001 Journal*, at 146.

<sup>14</sup> Bhakshi, U. and Galanter, M., *Panchayat Justice: An Indian*

*Experiment in Legal Access*, in M. Capelletti and Bryant Garth, *Access to Justice – A world Survey*, Sijhoff and Noordhpf, Milan, 1978, at 365.

<sup>15</sup> Law of Arbitration and Conciliation & ADR systems, by Avatar Singh, Eastern Book Company

made through conciliatory and pervasive efforts" is what "Lok Adalat" is defined as. Though initially, Lok Adalat camps were started in Junagarh District in Gujarat by 1982, the first Lok Adalat was held in Chennai in 1986. Soon this program was adopted by several other states, such as Bihar, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, etc., and now it has gained popularity throughout the country.

The popularity and usefulness of Lok Adalat for the rapid resolution of disputes have been fostered by the true implementation of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. According to popular belief, the "Lok Adalat" is a time-honored method of arbitration that was common in ancient India and continues to be used today. Gandhian ideals form the foundation of this system. It is among the elements that make up the ADR system. Due to the overwhelming backlog of cases in Indian courts, the cases must be decided by regular courts, which entails a drawn-out, costly, and time-consuming process. Even minor cases take years for the court to resolve. Lok Adalat therefore provides alternative resolutions or devices for expeditious and inexpensive justice.<sup>16</sup>

To enable the entire society to establish peace and harmony, Lok Adalat invites both pre-litigation and post-litigation efforts. Free legal aid is provided by the Legal Services Authorities Act of 1987 and is available before the courts as well as the Lok Adalat. When parties choose an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) method, the court must provide them with direction by highlighting the important considerations they must make before forming an opinion on the best way to resolve the dispute.<sup>17</sup>

### Critical Analysis of Lok Adalat

Lok Adalat is now believed to be among the top ADR systems available. Similar to any other system, Lok Adalat has its fair share of advantages and disadvantages. It is a well-known proverb that "justice delayed is justice denied, but justice hurried is justice buried." This proverb is absolutely correct. This fact was taken into consideration by the higher judiciary, which, in many of its decisions, directed that the expeditious proceeding that was carried out through the use of Lok Adalat should not infringe upon the rights of any of the parties involved.

The concerns for Lok Adalat have been addressed by the Supreme Court in the *State of Punjab v. Jalour Singh*<sup>18</sup>, which held that a Lok Adalat is purely conciliatory. It serves no judicial or

adjudicatory purpose. Given that compromise is at the heart of it, there is legitimate concern that the pursuit of expeditious case resolution may compromise the concept of justice. Most of the time, litigants are up against strong organizations like banks, insurance companies, and electricity boards, among others. The impoverished are frequently forced to accept compromises that are forced upon them. Instead of their rightful entitlements or meager compensation, these litigants typically have to accept the discounted future values of their claims. The only reason for doing this is to conclude a protracted legal proceeding. Similarly, under the state's so-called "harmony ideology," family courts essentially dictate how poor women should resolve marital conflicts. Real justice still eluded thousands of victims in the Bhopal gas tragedy, which was forced to be settled for a pitiful sum.

There are times when the attorneys are hesitant to refer the matter to Lok Adalat for the purpose of reaching a settlement. In certain instances, the parties may exert pressure on their attorney to adhere to the stringent procedures of the court. The High Court<sup>19</sup> observed, "In the name of the speedy resolution of disputes, the fair interests of the parties cannot be sacrificed, more importantly when the petitioners involved are minors, insane, and disabled."

While lamenting the current Lok-Adalat system, the Kerala High Court stated, "However, the major drawback in the existing scheme of organization of the Lok Adalat under Chapter VI of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, is that the system of Lok Adalat is primarily based on compromise or settlement between the parties. If the parties are unable to reach a compromise or settlement, the case is either returned to court or the parties are advised to seek legal redress. This causes unnecessary delays in the administration of justice. If the Lok Adalat is given the authority to decide cases on merits if parties fail to reach a compromise or settlement, this problem can be addressed to a large extent. Nevertheless, the permanent Lok Adalat has eliminated this flaw. Additionally, it has been noted that because the head of the Lok-Adalat forum is a member of the judiciary, they take on the role of the forum as a judicial forum and depart from the fundamental goals for which it was established.

### Challenges of Lok Adalat

The existence of antagonistic relationships

<sup>16</sup> 'Lok Adalat' by Om Prakash Tewari 2002, Pioneer Books

<sup>17</sup> Arbitration and Conciliation Law of India, 7th Edn. (Reprint) by Kwatra G. K.

<sup>18</sup> State of Punjab v. Jalour Singh, (2008) 2 SCC 660.

<sup>19</sup> Manju Gupta V National Insurance Company, I (1994) ACC 242, 1994 ACJ 1036 Volume 3, No. 2, Apr.– Jun., 2015

between judges and attorneys is one of the many factors that have been connected to the public's discontent. Another issue is the lack of preparation on the part of one or both parties' advocates, which makes it hard for the parties to reach a settlement and invariably delays the process by requiring the judge to reluctantly postpone it. Numerous cases show how judges and attorneys have failed to help their clients reach settlements that are best for them, leading to unfair outcomes for all parties. The entire process fails, and the case returns to the formal court system if one of the parties does not agree to the settlement. The legitimacy of such consent and the exercise of free will by the parties involved in proceedings before the Lok Adalat, however, are gravely questioned.

The fact that participation in Lok Adalat proceedings is entirely voluntary presents another significant barrier. Unlike formal courts, where parties are legally obligated to appear and participate in the judicial process, Lok Adalat relies on both parties agreeing to submit their dispute to the forum. Lok Adalat is unable to resolve a dispute if one party is unwilling to compromise or participate. This voluntary component presents a serious drawback, especially in cases where there are disparities in power between the parties. For example, in the absence of legal counsel or because they are unaware of their rights, a party with less money may feel under pressure to accept unfair compromises. However, strong organizations like businesses or governmental bodies might decline to take part at all, which would limit the options available to weaker parties for resolving conflicts.

Although the goal of Lok Adalats is to settle disputes quickly, this emphasis on effectiveness occasionally comes at the expense of the caliber of settlements. There is a chance that settlements will favor the more powerful party or fail to sufficiently address the underlying cause of the conflict because reaching a compromise is the main goal. Sometimes, the need to settle disputes swiftly can result in flimsy agreements that don't guarantee justice or offer lasting fixes. Furthermore, when disadvantaged parties in Lok Adalat lack legal representation, it could lead to unfair settlements where the weaker party consents to terms that are not optimal for them in order to avoid drawn-out disputes.

It is still very difficult to raise awareness of Lok Adalats' existence and operations, especially in rural areas and among marginalized communities. Many people are frequently ignorant of Lok Adalat's function in resolving disputes and the

advantages it provides over formal litigation, particularly those from underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds. The larger problem of legal literacy is intimately related to this ignorance. People from marginalized groups might be discouraged from approaching Lok Adalat at all if they don't have a clear understanding of their rights and the procedures available to enforce them. Furthermore, the disparity between the availability of Lok Adalat and its utilization by those who need it the most is made worse by the complexity of the legal system and the absence of focused public outreach initiatives.

A recurring problem that compromises Lok Adalats' efficacy and efficiency is inadequate infrastructure. Many Lok Adalat meetings are held with few resources, such as inadequate physical infrastructure, such as suitable locations, adequate administrative assistance, and technological access. This is especially noticeable in rural areas, which are more severely affected by difficulties in acquiring resources.

The efficient operation of Lok Adalat proceedings may also be hampered by a shortage of qualified staff, such as volunteers, mediators, and attorneys. The quality of mediation and the fairness of the results may be impacted by the frequent use of inexperienced staff or retired judges to supervise sessions. Furthermore, there is a possibility that Lok Adalat sessions do not have sufficient funding to cover the operational costs. This insufficient funding could lead to sessions that are held in an irregular manner or inadequate follow-up on settlements.

Due to this, it is now abundantly clear that Lok Adalat does not anymore represent the institutions of swift and equitable justice that they had become known for during the early years of their establishment. This is because Lok Adalat has become known for these institutions. A skewed perception of justice has been produced by an excessive focus on hitting high numbers, which may have distracted from the Legal Services Authorities Act's main goal of "promotion of justice through the compromise or settlement of disputes." Instead, the goal of reaching a compromise or settlement more frequently results in the denial of fair minimum claims to the petitioners, rather than a compromise or settlement that is beneficial to both parties.<sup>20</sup>

### **Suggestions and Recommendations**

With a high goal in mind, the Lok Adalat system was introduced, suggesting a potential stronghold over the masses in need of legal assistance. Friction is inevitable in any system, but even a small

<sup>20</sup> Sneha, *Lok Adalats: An Experiment with Informal Dispute Resolution in*

*India*, Lex Forti, (September 24, 2020), <https://lexforti.com/legal-news/lok-adalat/>.

amount of friction is preferable to obvious gaps. Presented below are some suggested solutions:

- **Statutory Recognition Exclusively using Lok Adalats would prove to be beneficial:**  
The system would undergo significant changes as a result of the statutory recognition of Lok Adalats and their rulings, which are binding on the disputing parties. This would effectively enable a significant reduction in the backlog of cases<sup>21</sup> and would cease to add fuel to the notion that the Lok Adalats create more backlogs as opposed to clearing them.
- **Lawyers' compensation must be improved:**  
According to the current trend, lawyers who preside over Lok Adalats are paid a pitiful amount. Since most attorneys work for free, it can be discouraging because everyone is trying to make a living. When faced with the choice between a Lok Adalat matter and possibly a full-fledged matter involving a significant amount of money between the parties in question, lawyers typically choose the latter option. This is due to the fact that they are the primary providers for their families or simply want a reasonable return on their investment for their services.
- **Abstaining Parties Should Be Penalized:**  
Although there is a widespread belief that Lok Adalats are more accommodating to individuals in comparison to traditional courts, it is important to note that certain requirements that are merely cosmetic should not be imposed. If a party has agreed to appear before the Lok Adalat but does not show up, the party ought to be penalized for their failure to do so.
- **Companies Should Be Persuaded to Participate in Lok Adalats:**  
Businesses should be encouraged to use Lok Adalats to resolve minor and trivial issues rather than ones that are best left to the National Company Law Tribunal. The ideal explanation for this is that banks and businesses that provide consumer goods and services can be held responsible to the individuals who are at the receiving end of the supply chain.
- **Volunteer associations, non-governmental organizations, and social action groups should be encouraged to devote time to serving Lok Adalats:**  
Only a small number of volunteer organizations appear to be actively involved, despite the fact that many groups actively support Legal Aid and the operations and conduct of Lok Adalats.
- **Infrastructure Should Be Provided:**  
For Lok Adalats, infrastructure is crucial because

prompt adjudication and thorough consideration of the case's merits are required. The Legal Services Authority Act, 1987, enunciates that the sources for funds are largely grants from the center and state. There can be other options for funds, such as a segregation of more than the frugal 0.2% in the Annual National Budget.

### Conclusion

The Indian legal system benefits greatly from the Legal Service Authority Act, 1987, which establishes the Lok Adalat to facilitate the prompt and efficient resolution of disputes between parties. The vast majority of India's illiterate population turns to the regular courts for justice, which is detrimental to both parties and the courts themselves. This overburdens the courts, and the procedures at the courts are costly, inefficient, and time-consuming. It calls for a robust and efficient legal service for the underprivileged and needy in light of the current state of society and the disparity in economic circumstances among its members.

The Lok Adalat system is now an established and well-respected component of India's legal system; the moment has come to address issues that do not naturally belong there. The time has come for legislators, jurists, attorneys, and judges to assist in revising the model law that governs Lok Adalat so that it can take over public-spirited business disputes, conflicts involving the general public, and issues in which the government is involved. The rule of law and our diverse democratic values will be greatly strengthened by it.

In all appearances, Lok Adalat has accomplished its stated goals and more through its operations. Lok Adalat seems to be doing a respectable job overall, but nothing out of the ordinary. So, there is a need to strengthen the system of Lok Adalat in the recent context, which, in turn, helps to realize the constitutional goals of 'equal and social justice' to their fullest extent.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, it will be beneficial to regain and reaffirm the confidence of the general public in the judicial system.

Additionally, Lok Adalat is an important step in India's quest for fair and accessible justice. In a nation where legal complexities frequently impede the pursuit of justice, its capacity to bridge the gap between the informal and formal justice systems is praiseworthy, providing a workable alternative for resolving disputes. Stakeholders can improve Lok Adalat's ability to effectively administer justice by resolving its issues and constraints and putting the suggestions into practice.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> International Journal of Legal Studies, "ADR Mechanisms and their Role in Indian Legal System," Vol. 5, No. 2 (2023).

<sup>22</sup> Katju M. The challenges of justice delivery in India. *Indian Journal of Law.* 2020;6(2):45-56.

<sup>23</sup> Srinivasan, R. (2016). "A Comparative Study of Lok Adalats and Traditional Courts." *Journal of Comparative Law,* 22(4), 120-135.

The quest for justice is a lifelong process that calls for constant innovation and adaptation. In addition to increasing Lok Adalat's efficacy, the dedication to promoting a culture of communication, understanding, and compromise will also help create a society that is more equitable and peaceful. Mechanisms like Lok Adalat will be crucial in ensuring that justice is available, prompt, and equitable for all citizens as India negotiates the complexity of a varied legal system. It is possible for Lok Adalat to fulfill its promise of serving as a vital link between informal and formal justice systems by making consistent efforts to promote awareness, enhance legal literacy, and improve resource allocation. This will ultimately result in a legal framework that is more responsive and inclusive.

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