

Lok Adalats In Punjab: A Pathway To Justice

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I. INTRODUCTION

Justice is the most important component of any civilized society. The notion of justice evokes the cognition of the rule of law, of the resolution of conflicts, of institutions that make law and of those who enforce it. The dispute resolution mechanism chosen by a society reflects the concept of justice in that society. Access to justice, in its widest sense of the effective resolution of disputes whether through court-based litigation or alternative dispute resolution processes, is an essential aspect of ensuring the realization of the fundamental rights recognized and given protection by the Constitution¹.

In a country which is geographically large and overpopulated with a system of plurality of laws, low literacy levels and abject poverty, anything good or bad can happen and mostly does happen in one corner or the other of the country. Society is filled with tensions and these tensions give rise to disputes and these disputes have to be resolved expeditiously before they assume ugly proportions. In a society governed by the Rule of Law, it is essential that its members respect and obey the laws. This can be possible only when the victim of the infraction of the law receives the protection of the law for otherwise it is but natural that the victim will try to evolve his own methodology of protection which may include resorting to violence².

As a body sitting in judgment of the collective destiny of over one billion people, diverse in many respects and united under a democratic constitution, the Indian Supreme Court is no doubt one of the most powerful institutions of its kind anywhere in the world³. During the six decades of its functioning it has received bouquets and brickbats for its acts and omissions. By all accounts, the judiciary, compared to the other two wings of government, has performed well sustaining the trust of the people in its independence, fairness and impartiality. However, critics have faulted it for the enormous delay in adjudicating matters and the consequent problems in accessing justice for a large section of the people. The only way in which easy access to justice can be provided to them is by developing an alternative which would carry justice to their door steps. This has been possible through Lok-Adalats and Para Legal and Legal Literacy Camps which offers an informal system for on the spot resolution of dispute, prevent disruption of local unity and secure social justice which is in tune with the life style and culture.

II. CONSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The term 'Access to Justice' cannot be given any precise meaning. Access to Justice in the general term, means the individual's access to court or a guarantee of legal representation. It has many fundamental elements such as identification and recognition of grievance, awareness and legal advice or assistance, accessibility to court or claim for relief, adjudication of grievance, enforcement of relief, of course this may be the ultimate goal of litigant public⁴.

Indian judicial system, like those in commonwealth countries, is firmly rooted in the common law tradition. The subject of 'access to justice' is one of great contemporary importance. The words 'access to

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¹ Retrieved from <www.ijhssi.org> accessed on 15-10-2015.

² T.S. Shyam Prasad, "Role of Lok-Adalats in Indian Judiciary as a Dispute Resolution Mechanism in Order to Achieve Social Justice- A study, IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, Vol. 19, Issue 9, Ver. 9, Sep. 2014, p. 20.

³ N.R. Madhava Menon, *Law and Justice: A look at the Role and Performance of Indian Judiciary*, Retrieved from <<http://www.indiandemocracy08.berkeley.edu/docs/menon-lawandjsutice-Alook%20.pdf>> accessed on 11-10-2015

⁴ Pardeep K.P., *Access to Justice- New Challenges*, Retrieved from <<http://www.lawyersclubindia.com/articles/Access-to-jsutice-New-Challenges-3353.asp#.VitSjberS1s>> accessed on 11-10-2015.

justice' immediately stir up in our mind the idea that every person who seeks justice must be provided with the requisite monies to approach a Court of Justice. But, that is the not the only meaning of these words. They also refer to the nature of different rights, to the number of courts, to the quality of justice, to the independence of the Judges who man the courts, to legal aid and public interest litigation⁵.

The Constitution of India is the living document of this country and the basic law of this Nation. As disclosed in its preamble, it stands for securing justice to all the Citizens. In Article 39A, the Constitution retains its aspiration to secure and promote access to justice, in following terms.

"The state shall secure that the operations of the legal system promote justice, on the basis of equal opportunity and shall, in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities".

Identification and protection of these rights, especially that of the poor and disadvantaged people must be the chief concern, while formulating the principles of access to justice. Apart from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Constitution of India, guarantees, fundamental rights in its Part III, from Articles 14 to 32. This includes, right to equality, freedoms right to life, religious rights, minority rights and finally the special right which guarantees constitutional remedies in cases of infringement of fundamental rights. Additionally, any action abridging the fundamental rights are subject to inherent or implied limitation, as per the Doctrine of Basic structure of Constitution.

There are other sets of rights guaranteed as per the express provisions in the statutes. Right of representation in elected bodies, right to maintenance, right to minimum wages, right to social security, right to vote are some of such rights. In India, there are number of statutes dealing with these special kinds of rights, such as Representation of Peoples Act, Minimum Wages Act, Provisions for Maintenance under Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, Social securities under Workmen's Compensation Act, Industrial Disputes Act, Employee's Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, Payment of Bonus Act, Payment of Gratuity Act, Employees State Insurance Act etc.

The concept of access to justice, primarily, necessitates a potential system securing appropriate legal remedies within the Civil and Criminal justice fields. Judiciary, being an integral part and parcel of an effective judicial system, has a greater role in ensuring access to justice. As per V.R. Krishna Iyer, the prominent jurist of our Country and the former Judge of the Supreme Court of India, access to justice, which is fundamental in implementation of every human right, makes the judicial role pivotal to constitutional functionalism⁶.

III. OBSTACLES IN ACHIEVING JUSTICE

Lack of awareness of justifiable problems and lack of sources and availability of advices, are the two major barriers to the access to justice. However in countries like India, the financial burden of the litigation is also a major factor. The United Nations Development Programme in its Note on Access to Justice, added two other factors namely, long delays in adjudications and excessive number of laws, as additional barriers to access to justice. Some of the barriers to Access to Justice are enumerated below.

(a) Access to Constitutional Courts

In our constitutional framework, petitions for protection and enforcement of fundamental rights can be filed only in the High Courts and the Supreme Court. Thus, for instance, even petitions arising out of issues such as disappearances, custodial violence, encounter killings or instances where the police cannot be activated due to various reasons, have to be sent or filed to the High Court. Invariably, this involves travel to the High Court, engaging a lawyer there and regular follow up⁷. A lot of time and expense is involved in this process. Even habeas corpus petitions can only be filed in the High Court. Thus the division of jurisdiction between High Courts and subordinate courts needs to be re-examined.

(b) Costs

The cost of litigation in India is very high. This is also a repercussion of the adoption of adversarial model of litigation. Since the court cases drag on for years, the costs increases manifolds. In a country like India, where a substantial proportion of population still lives below the poverty line, the adverse cost benefit of taking recourse to the courts is very low. In fact the entire adjudicatory mechanism being alien to the Indian society, there is a lack of faith on the judiciary. It aggravates due to the fact that justice seems to be illusory in India.

⁵ Justice M. Jagannadha Rao, *Access to Justice*, Retrieved from <http://www.delhihighcourt.nic.in/library/articles/access%20to%20justice.pdf> > accessed on 13-10-2015.

⁶ Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, *Legally Speaking*, (Universal law Publishing Co.: New Delhi, 2003) p. 171.

⁷ Iftikhar Hussain Bhat, *Access to Justice: A Critical Analysis of Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms in India*, Retrieved from < [http://www.ijhssi.org/papers/v2\(5\)/version-5/G254653.pdf](http://www.ijhssi.org/papers/v2(5)/version-5/G254653.pdf)> accessed on 16-10-2015.

(c) Delay

Due to the adversarial model, the expediency of the litigatory process has been sacrificed. In an average, a civil case takes 20 years to settle. This problem of delay is due to the extended role of advocates in the litigation process. Despite being officers of the Court, they do not have any accountability towards expedient disposal of cases. Similarly there is no accountability of the judges to dispose off cases as early as possible. With huge influx of cases on a daily basis and substantial amount of arrears⁸.

(d) Awareness

The general lack of awareness of legal rights and remedies acts as a formidable barrier to accessing the formal adjudication machinery⁹.

(e) Mystification

The language of the law, invariably in very difficult and complicated English, makes it unintelligible even to the literate or educated person. And this is the language that courts and lawyers are comfortable with. Very little attempt has been made at vernacularising the language of the law and making it simpler and easily comprehensible

(f) Geographical location

This is an aspect that has not merited the attention it deserves. We need to audit the physical accessibility of courts from the point of view of user friendliness. And this need not involve additional costs. For instance, we have not yet designed our courtrooms and buildings to account for the needs of differently-abled people.

IV. ALTERNATE DISPUTE RESOLUTION METHODS AND BEGINNING OF LOK ADALATS

With the evolution of modern States and sophisticated legal mechanisms, the courts run on very formal processes and are presided over by trained adjudicators entrusted with the responsibilities of resolution of disputes on the part of the State. The seekers of justice approach the courts of justice with pain and anguish in their hearts on having faced legal problems and having suffered physically or psychologically. They do not take the law into their own hands as they believe that they would get justice from the courts at the end and on some day. It is the obligation of judiciary to deliver quick and inexpensive justice shorn of the complexities of procedure. However, the reality is that it takes a very long time to get justice through the established court system. Obviously, this leads to a search for an alternative complementary and supplementary mechanisms to the process of the traditional civil court for inexpensive, expeditious and less cumbersome and, also, less stressful resolution of disputes. But, the elements of judiciousness, fairness equality and compassion cannot be allowed to a sacrificed at the altar of expeditious disposal¹⁰. The hackneyed saying is that “Justice delayed is justice denied”. But justice has to be imparted: ‘Justice cannot be hurried to be buried’. The case have to “decided” and not just “disposed of”. This creates the dilemma of providing speedy and true justice. This is easier said than done.

Alternative dispute resolution encompasses arbitration, mediation, conciliation, and other methods—short of formal litigation—for resolving disputes. Alternative dispute resolution offers several advantages over a lawsuit. It is less adversarial and in some cases can be faster and less expensive. It can also reduce court workloads. For these reasons its use is being promoted by court reformers in many developing and transition economies¹¹. Lok Adalat is one of the fine and familiar mechanism of ADR which has been playing role in the settlement of disputes.

The expression Lok Adalat comprises two words, namely, ‘lok’ and ‘adalat’, the former expressing the concept of public opinion while the latter denoting the accurate and through deliberation aspect of decision

⁸ Debroy, B, *In the Dock Absurdities of Indian Law*, (Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd.: New Delhi, 2000) p.75.

⁹ Iftikhar Hussain Bhat, *Access to Justice: A Critical Analysis of Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms in India*, Retrieved from < [http://www.ijhssi.org/papers/v2\(5\)/version-5/G254653.pdf](http://www.ijhssi.org/papers/v2(5)/version-5/G254653.pdf)> accessed on 16-10-2015.

¹⁰ Anurag K. Agarwal, *Role of Alternative Disputes Resolution Methods in Development of Society: Lok Adalat in India*, Retrieved from < <http://www.iimahd.ernet.in/publications/data/2005-11-01anurag.pdf>> accessed on 11-10-2015.

¹¹ Peter Newman (ed.), *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics and the Law*, Mac millian Reference, London, Vol. 1, 1998, p. 236.

making. In simple terms, this refers to a forum for settlement of disputes, employing ADR techniques, such as Negotiation, Conciliation, and Mediation etc

The Lok Adalats have originated from the collapse of the conventional legal system to provide effective, fast, and inexpensive justice. Constitutional 42nd Amendment Act of 1976, incorporated Article 39-A in the Constitution of India for providing free legal aid. In the light of this amendment the Government of India by a resolution dated September 26, 1980 constituted a committee known as 'Committee for Implementing Legal Aid Scheme' under the Chairmanship of Mr. Justice P. N. Bhagwati to monitor and implement legal aid programmes on a uniform basis in all the States and Union Territories throughout the country and pursuant thereto several Legal Aid and Advice Boards were set up in all the States and UTs of India. The constitution of the 'Committee for the Implementation of Legal Aid Schemes' (CILAS) in 1980 was a major step in institutionalizing legal aid¹².

One of the strategic legal aid programmes adopted by the Committee pertains to holding of Lok Adalats for settlement of disputes through conciliation. The Lok Adalats are an innovative form of voluntary efforts for amicable settlement of disputes between the parties. Camps of Lok Adalats were started initially in Gujarat in March, 1982. The first Lok Adalat was held on March 14, 1982 at Junagarh in Gujarat.

The Lok Adalat has been given statutory status⁵ under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. Under the said Act, the award made by the Lok Adalat is deemed to be the decree of a civil court and is final and binding on all parties and no appeal lies before any court against its award. The State Legal Services Authority or District Legal Services Authority as the case may be on receipt of an application from any one of the parties to any pre-litigation stage matter refer such matter to the Lok Adalat for amicable settlement¹³.

The Permanent Lok-Adalat is advance version of Lok-Adalat with additional features of having residuary powers. As, Permanent Lok-Adalat is statutory body and its decision is binding and it can decide the matter even if, the parties fails to arrive at settlement and compromise.¹⁴ Therefore, the permanent Lok-Adalat has residuary jurisdiction, in addition to the jurisdiction enjoy by the Lok- Adalat, to decide dispute by virtue of S.22C (8) even if dispute between parties failed after conciliation. The Amendment has been introduced in Section 22 of the said Act in 2002, which provides for setting up of Permanent Lok Adalat to provide compulsory pre-litigative mechanism for conciliation and settlement of cases relating to public utility services, like postal, telegraph or telephone service etc.

Over 11,20,232 Lok Adalats have been organized so far in various parts of the country at which about 4,30,41,883 cases have been settled, including 21,04,817 cases of motor accident claims wherein compensation amounting to over Rs.115,821,527,600/- disbursed to the claimants up to 31.03.2013 as per the report and Statistical Data published by the National Legal Services Authority. Lok Adalats have also been successful in settling the cases of a large number of persons affected on account of acquisition of their lands for public purposes¹⁵

V. STATUS OF LOK ADALATS IN THE STATE OF PUNJAB

The legal Services Authority Act, 1987 came into force throughout the country w.e.f. 09-11-1995. Thereafter Punjab Government constituted Punjab Legal services Authority which came into being on 04-10-1996. Hon'ble Chief Justice of Punjab & Haryana High Court is the Patron-in-Chief while the Hon'ble Judge is Executive Chairman of this Authority. Judicial officer of the rank of District Judge is the Member Secretary of the Authority. At each district and sub-divisional Level, District Legal Services Authority as well as Sub-divisional Legal Services Committee have been constituted. District and Session Judge is the Chairman of District Legal Services Authority whereas Additional Civil Judge (Senior Division) is the Chairman of Sub-Divisional Legal Services Committees.

NALSA has framed the Regulations for providing free and competent legal services to the needy and poor masses of the country. Punjab Legal Services Authority is providing Legal Services in accordance with the above said regulations and the Legal Services Authority Act, 1987. As per the section 12 of the Act, 1987 followings are the categories, who are entitled for the Free Legal Services.

1. A member of Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe.
2. A Victim of trafficking in human beings or beggar.

¹² Nareshlata Singla, *Experience of India in Decongesting Courts Through Lok Adalats*, Retrieved from <http://www.ijmra.us/project%20doc/IJPSS_MAY2012/IJMRA-PSS1101.pdf> accessed on 13-10-2015.

¹³ Deepa P. Patil, *A Critical Analysis on Lok-Adalat in India*, Retrieved from <<http://www.researchfront.in/16%20APRIL-JUNE%202015/7.pdf>> accessed on 15-10-2015.

¹⁴ Avtar Singh, *Law of Arbitration & Conciliation*, (Eastern Book Co.: New Delhi, 2010) p.124.

¹⁵ T.S. Shyam Parasd, *Role of Lokadalaths in Indian Judiciary as a Dispute Resolution Mechanism In Order To Achieve Social Justice-A Study*, Retrieved from <<http://iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol19-issue9/Version-9/D019992031.pdf>> accessed on 17-10-20105.

3. A woman or a child.
4. A person with disability such as suffering from blindness, leprosy, loco-motory disability, hearing impairment, mental incapacity.
5. A victim of mass disaster, ethnic violence, caste atrocity, flood, drought, earthquake of industrial disaster.
6. An industrial workman.
7. An under trail in custody, including a juvenile or a mentally ill person in a psychiatric hospital or psychiatric nursing home.
8. A person with an annual income of less than Rs. 1,50,000/-

The Punjab Legal Services Authority has done a remarkable work in providing free and competent legal Services to the needy & poor masses of the state. Statistical information regarding number of Lok Adalats held & settled cases have been given below¹⁶.

Financial year	Number of Lok Adalats held.	Number of cases taken up.	Number of cases settled.	Amount Settled
1998-1999	357	22,300	11,674	23,48,65,014/-
1999-2000	494	26,358	12,890	398,90,66,94/-
2000-2001	512	68,609	36,786	81,6049,631/-
2001-2002	468	81,339	38,187	1,34,27,91,519/-
2002-2003	396	49,182	22,156	82,29,96,780/-
2003-2004	430	81,883	51,248	81,86,02,445/-
2004-2005	474	30,745	16,181	75,20,96,369/-
2005-2006	444	1,43,861	76,573	230,06,60,863/-
2006-2007	524	76,824	53,231	211,88,16,655/-
2007-2008	565	1,12,079	63,820	197,45,43,320/-
2008-2009	473	5,04,625	4,10,375	609,21,75,259/-
2009-2010	508	57,379	35,890	199,75,77,728/-
2010-2011	472	64,239	44,258	260,79,51,123/-
2011-2012	765	1,09,407	76,407	460,04,28,974/-
2012-2013	589	2,28,157	1,90,058	504,72,70,928/-
2013-2014	338	4,49,482	349,648	639,04,88,308/-
2014-2015	426	40,001	25,515	5,95,39,40,877/-
2015-Upto May, 2015	97	7,438	4,748	2,61,10,48,618/-

Beneficiaries under Legal Aid Schemes with break up of different categories¹⁷.

VI. LOK ADALATS UNDER PUNJAB LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

Monthly Lok Adalat

Punjab Legal Services Authority has introduced a new system of holding of Monthly Lok Adalats w.e.f. February 2011, in all the Judicial Courts on every last working Saturday of the month. A similar system of holding such Lok Adalats on last working Friday of the month has also been introduced in Labour Tribunals and Consumer Disputes Redressal Forums in the State. The previous system of holding quarterly Lok Adalats has been discontinued and the litigants have benefited a lot from the Monthly Lok Adalats as now they don't have to wait for three months for disposal of their case. The prime objective of Lok Adalats is to settle the disputes amicably through compromise so as to save the time and money of the parties and to reduce personal enmity

¹⁶ Retrieved from <<http://www.pulsa.gov.in/PageContent.aspx?sts=68>> accessed on 18-10-2015.

¹⁷ Retrieved from <<http://www.pulsa.gov.in/PageContent.aspx?sts=68>> accessed on 18-10-2015.

between them. Except non compoundable Criminal Cases, all kind of cases even at pre-litigative stage can be brought before the Lok Adalat for amicable settlement.

Special Lok Adalat

As per the section 19 of Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 the State Authority is organizing Special Lok Adalat for specific cases i.e. Negotiable Instrument Act, Family Court, MGNREGA, Petty Criminal Cases, MACT, Revenue, Consumer, cases relating to Women & Children etc.

Mega Lok Adalat

In Mega Lok Adalat all kind of cases pending in various Courts of Districts i.e. Revenue Court, Consumer Court, Criminal Court, Civil Court and Tribunals/Commissions and pre-litigative cases are taken up. Lok Adalat Benches are constituted for entire District. As per 13th Finance Commission the State Authority shall hold 10 Mega Lok Adalats in each year during the period of year 2010-15.

Permanent Lok Adalat (Public Utility Services)

As per the Legal Services Authority Act, (Amendment Act), 2002, Permanent Lok Adalats (Public Utility Services) have been constituted at district level. Pre-litigative cases relating to Public Utility Services like postal, Telegraph, Supply of power, System of Public Conservancy, Service in Hospital, Insurance Services, Banking, Housing, Financing, Transport and Immigration Services are decided in these Lok Adalats.

Punjab Legal Services Authority has established 14 Permanent Lok Adalat (Public Utility Services) in different district Amritsar, Bathinda, Ferozepur, Faridkot, Fatehgarh Sahib, Gurdaspur, Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Ludhiana, Moga, Patiala, Ropar and S.B.S. Nagar. 1,24,822 cases has been settled and disposed off permanent lok Adalats (Public Utility Services) in the state of Punjab.

Legal Aid Clinics

The Punjab Legal Services Authorities has trained 2332 Para Legal Volunteers up to June 2015 which includes 786 women, 60 teachers, 97 long term prisoners & 1389 other volunteers. The authority has also established 1195 legal literacy club in various Schools and colleges in state of Punjab.

The efforts of the Punjab Legal Services Authority (PLSA) in resolving disputes through innovative methods have not gone unnoticed. The Union government has asked to all the states to follow Punjab's example in successful usage of Alternate Dispute Redressal (ADR) mechanism to deal high number of consumer cases. Even the International Labour Organization (ILO) has appreciated the Punjab experience in Alternate Dispute Redressal of Labour dispute cases. At an ILO conference in Manesar (Haryana) in 2005 representatives of eight countries decided to study the Punjab experience in detail and then to suggest their respective governments to implement the same. The ILO has also sought details from the Punjab Government on the mechanism, adopted by the Lok Adalats in settling Labour disputes out of court and that too in a matter of hours¹⁸.

VII. DISPERSING HORIZONS OF ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Presently, Lok Adalat is considered to be one of the best Alternative Disputes Resolution Systems. Just like every other system, Lok Adalat is also having several virtues and it suffers from few ill as well. As it is rightly said that, "Justice delayed is a Justice denied but Justice hurried is a Justice buried". Keeping this fact in mind, the higher judiciary in many of its judgments directed that, the speedy proceeding conducted by way of Lok Adalat should not impair the right of any party¹⁹.

The lawyers are sometimes reluctant to refer the matter for settlement in Lok Adalat. Sometimes parties may pressurize their lawyer to stick up to the strict process of court. The High Court²⁰ 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 expressing its lamented remark about the present Lok-Adalat system, the Kerala High Court pointed out the drawback as – "However, the major drawback in the existing scheme of organization of the Lok Adalat under Chapter VI of the Legal Services Authorities Act is that the system of Lok Adalat is mainly based on compromise or settlement between the parties. If the parties do not arrive at any compromise or settlement, the case is either returned to the court of law or the parties are advised to seek remedy in a court of law. This causes unnecessary delay in the dispensation of justice. If Lok Adalat has given power to decide the cases on merits in case parties fail to arrive at any compromise or settlement, this problem can be tackled to a great extent". However this defect has been removed in permanent

¹⁸ Retrieved from <<http://tribuneindia.com/2006/20060304/saturday/main1.htm>> accessed on 18-10-2015.

¹⁹ Deepa P. Patil, *A Critical Analysis on Lok-Adalat in India*, Retrieved from <<http://www.researchfront.in/16%20APRIL-JUNE%202015/7.pdf>> accessed on 15-10.-2015.

²⁰ Manju Gupta v National Insurance Company, I (1994) ACC 242, 1994 ACJ 1036.

Lok-Adalat. It has also been observed that since the forum of Lok-Adalat are headed by the person from judiciary, they assume the role of Lok-Adalat as judicial forum and deviate from the basic objectives for which it has been formed. The Supreme Court has also lamented on this issue.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Since the Lok-Adalats have been held throughout the length and breadth of our country; the time is ripe for taking stock of the situation and identifying the shortcomings, if any, and finding solutions to overcome or remove them. At present, in the absence of an alternative forum, all disputes are required to be carried to courts for adjudication. In other countries the emphasis is shifting to have disputes settled through negotiations, mediation and if necessary arbitration. Unfortunately, the cost of proceedings before the arbitrators has risen sharply and that mode of settlement is fast becoming virtually beyond the reach of the common man. We have therefore, to depend more and more on negotiation, conciliation and mediation. Unless we settle the cases at the threshold level, through negotiations, etc., we will not be able to check the in-flow of the cases to courts²¹. If we are not be able to ensure that cases which do not involve any substantial question of law are settled outside the Court-rooms we will not be able to assist the legal system in deciding cases taken to court within a reasonable time.

The legal profession being the custodian of legal knowledge and information is, therefore, expected to play a dynamic role to discharge its obligation to society. The privilege to practice law and to be member of the noble profession carries with it the obligation to place service to society above self-interest. Therefore, if members of the profession realize this obligation to society and try to resolve disputes at the threshold levels of in their chambers rather than push them in courts, they will render a great social service which will go a long way in helping retain people's confidence in the system. One of the main contributions to the litigation docket is the Government. The Central and State Governments do not come forward to settle their cases through Lok-Adalats for one reason or the other. This creates a somewhat paradoxical situation since the State Legal Services Authorities or Mandal or Taluk Legal Services Committees are financed by the State Governments. It is at times embarrassing when questioned why the Government does not show confidence in a system it is financing. Another aspect in the concept of free legal aid is training of Para-legal volunteers to help our poor and ignorant masses. Great care must; however, be taken in the choice of personnel for such training. In the first place, we must be assured that those chosen have the basic education for understanding and assimilating the elementary knowledge about the laws in regard to which they are imparted training. Secondly, we must ensure that they are service-oriented and have roots in the areas where they are expected to operate. It is no use training those who have no roots or likely to leave the area or zone in search of pursuits elsewhere. Thirdly, we should take care in picking up only those laws for training which are likely to prove useful in that area. Fourthly, they must be provided sufficient incentive and status in the society for the services rendered by them. Thus it can be concluded that the overall functioning and achievement of Lok Adalat appears to be appreciable though not remarkable. So there is a need strengthen the system of Lok Adalat in recent context, which in turn, help to realize the Constitutional goals of 'equal and social justice' to its fullest extent. It will, in turn, helpful to regain to reaffirm the public confidence in the judiciary.

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²¹ T.S. Shyam Prasad, "Role of Lok-Adalats in Indian Judiciary as a Dispute Resolution Mechanism in Order to Achieve Social Justice- A study," *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 19, Issue 9, Ver. 9, Sep. 2014, p. 29.