
LOK ADALAT: A JUDICIAL REVOLUTION IN INDIAN LEGAL LANDSCAPE

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ABSTRACT

The concept of Lok Adalat's system developed before independence and particularly during the British regime. This has deep roots in Indian legal history and its close allegiance to the culture and perception of justice in Indian ethos. The introduction of Lok Adalat creates a new chapter in the justice dispensation system of this country. Lok Adalat is one of the components of ADR systems. the concept of this settlement of the dispute through mediation, negotiation, or an arbitral process known as Lok Adalat. In India, the judges and the judicial branch of the Government occupy a prominent and powerful position, indeed, the importance of the Courts. Right from its inception, the apex Court in India has influenced the national policy-making agenda in significant proportions. In a large number of issues, while deciding the cases, the judiciary marched a long way to materialize the Constitutional goal and the protection of human rights. The judiciary played a vital role in not only providing legal aid but also institutionalizing the concept of Lok Adalat, which evolved as an instrument for providing legal aid. The institution of the judiciary not only influenced the enactment of the Legal Services Authority Act, of 1987 but was also determined so that the Act could be implemented all over the country with its true spirit. The judiciary even directed the Government to provide funds to NGOs to encourage people's participation through legal awareness, so that the Legal Aid program can succeed. The judiciary delivered many judgments for the strengthening of Lok Adalat. The most vital challenge before the judiciary was to provide access to justice to a large number of people in the country. It went on further directing the Government and Governmental organizations to hold permanent Lok Adalat in their concerned departments to settle the grievances of the citizens speedily and cost-effectively. The judiciary tried its best to provide access to justice to the downtrodden people.

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Lok Adalat, a unique alternate dispute resolution mechanism in India, embodies the principles of mediation, negotiation, and conciliation in its pursuit of amicable dispute resolution. This article explores the origins, objectives, and challenges facing Lok Adalat, emphasizing its role in providing cost-effective and expedited justice to all citizens. It highlights the judiciary's significant contributions to the development and enforcement of Lok Adalat, as well as the need for legislative enhancements to broaden its jurisdiction. The article concludes by acknowledging Lok Adalat's potential as a vital instrument in promoting justice, equality, and access to justice in India's legal landscape.

Keywords: Legal Aid, Legal Literacy, Ngo, Judiciary, and speedy justice. Etc.

INTRODUCTION

The ancient concept of settlement of disputes through mediation, negotiation, or an arbitral process known as the "Peoples Court verdict" or decision of "Nyaya Panch" is conceptualized and institutionalized in the philosophy of Lok Adalat. Lok Adalat is one of the alternate dispute resolution mechanisms, it is a unique forum where disputes pending in court or at the pre-litigation stage are settled amicably. It reduces the burden on the judiciary and involves the Rule of Law in India. It has been given statutory status under the Legal Services Authority Act, of 1987. The constitution aims at providing justice to all irrespective of race, creed, color, religion, etc. The judiciary plays an active role in expanding the scope of Lok Adalat and keeps a check on its working as well.

Meaning and Concept of Lok Adalat

Lok Adalat is one of the alternate dispute redressal forms to provide qualitative and speedy justice to a common man, thus it means it is a place of justice for a common man¹. However, strictly speaking, a Lok Adalat is not a court in its accepted connotation, as understood by jurists but the common people may find Attributes of a Court in Lok Adalat. It is a new system of dispensation of justice, which has come into existence to grapple with the problem of giving cheap and speedy justice to the people, generally speaking, Lok Adalat is a para-judicial institution being developed by the people themselves, still in its infancy, trying to

¹ Dr. Anupama kurlwal, An introduction to Alternative Dispute Resolution System, P-223, Central Law publications, second edition, 2014.

find an appropriate structure and procedure in the struggle of the common people for justice.

It is a forum where the parties to a dispute, by voluntary efforts, are aimed at bringing about a settlement through convivial and persuasive efforts. Indeed, Lok Adalat is not a substitute for the present judicial system but to help the courts in reducing the arrears of cases and reduce the speed of new institutions. Lok Adalat does not decide cases on merits and demerits but they persuade the parties by explaining the advantages of compromising the case.²

The Lok Adalat is a novel system of dispensation of justice that has come into existence to meet the problem of giving cheap and speedy justice to poor people. We should be clear in our mind as to what this system is, because some still look skeptically at this experiment, and some suspect it is a gimmick. Yet some people see a ray of hope in this new experiment. The Lok Adalat system is not a substitute for the present judicial system, but a supplementary to it so that the arrears of cases in courts of law may be reduced³. The Lok Adalat system is giving a practical shape to the twin concepts of Swaraj and Sarvodaya propounded by the founding fathers of the Nation. The concept of the Swaraj implies not merely liberation from the foreign power but also emancipation from backwardness, poverty, and illiteracy. The concept of Sarvodaya means well-being of all, without any distinction between haves and have-nots. It casts a duty upon us to work constructively and actively to uplift the downtrodden from the sin of poverty and ignorance in which centuries of subjugation have immersed them.

The Indian Constitution envisages providing all justice, social-economic, and political equality before the law and equal protection of the law. Lok Adalat implies the resolution of people's disputes by discussion, counseling, persuasion, and conciliation so that it gives speedy and cheap justice with the mutual and free consent of the parties. In short, the concept of Lok Adalat implies speedy and cheap justice to the common man at his doorstep. It is a participatory justice in which people and judges participate and resolve their disputes by discussion and mutual consent of parties.

Objectives of Lok Adalat

The basic objective of Lok Adalat is

² S.K. Sarkar, *Law relating to Lok Adalats & Legal Aid*, p.174, 2010,

³ Dr. Anupama Kurlwal, *An introduction to Alternative Dispute Resolution System*, P-226, Central Law publications, second edition, 2014.

- To friendly overcome the differences or hostility and try to bring about a solution, which is acceptable to both parties by the intervention of the third party.
- The restructuring of the judicial system at the grassroots level should also form part of effective legal services programs.
- The finest hour of justice is when foes compose their fight through fair settlement to become friends. This can be achieved only by having an alternative forum for conciliation and adjudication involving little cost and no delay with an informal procedure confirming only the requirement of natural justice, where the keynote would be justice rather than law.
- After the enactment of the Legal Services Act, permanent Lok Adalats have been established at different levels by various legal services authorities but voluntary organizations can still organize Lok Adalats.
- The aim of Lok Adalat is the humanitarian aspect and the basic purpose of the Lok Adalat is not to impose justice. The people are awakened to their rights and duties vis-a-vis the rights and duties of others.
- The objective of Lok Adalat is to settle the disputes which are pending before the courts, through negotiations, and conciliation, and by adopting persuasive common sense and a humane approach to the problems of the disputants.

Future Challenges for Lok Adalat

The Lok Adalat is a boon for the Indian legal system. Lok Adalat is an effective measure for getting an economical, easy, and early settlement of the disputes between the parties. Lok Adalat is an effective measure for getting effective and early justice for all sections of Indian society. The concept of legal service which includes Lok Adalat is a "revolutionary evolution of resolution of the dispute".

The Legal Service Authority Act, of 1987 provides for legal aid to needy people. However the quality of Legal Aid needs to be improved. Millions of people who live below the poverty line in the tribal and backward areas look up to the Legal Service Authority Act, of 1987

for legal guidance and support for the solution of their legal problems. At the time of the litigation, such people feel cheated as if they are fighting an unequal battle against the person who is in a better economic condition than the other party because they can get better legal assistance than the economically unsound party. Revising the payment schedule of the legal aid panel advocates and the panel should be given more work and remuneration so that the needy people should be served properly and be given proper advice which may be needed in the settlement of the dispute⁴.

Legal Aid and legal literacy rates among the poor and needy people should be expanded. Lok Adalat has been acting as an effective measure for the solution of the dispute and reaching an amicable settlement⁵. The system of Lok Adalats is no more new to the legal system of India, it has become an effective part of the Indian legal system, and now is the time to bring such matters under the jurisdiction of Lok Adalats which do not fall under its domain. It is high time for lawmakers, jurists, lawyers, and judges to help modify the current model law governing Lok Adalats and include such areas under its jurisdiction as business disputes or conflicts where the public at large is involved and the matters where the government is involved in One or the other way⁶.

Lok Adalats as a part of alternate dispute resolution methods is an effective way of settlement of disputes in an amicable manner. However, in modern times it needs a few changes to cope with the present scenario. Lok Adalats need to be given more power to have their decisions accepted by the parties to the dispute. Lok Adalat being a new branch has a long way to go, Even today it's effective machinery but still needs some changes and more power to deal with present issues. Lok Adalat still has a long way to go, and its efficiency in the future depends on what more powers are given to it to deal with present and future issues which may come it.

JUDICIAL PERSPECTIVE OF LOKADALAT

The judiciary played a vital role in not only providing legal aid but also institutionalizing the concept of Lok Adalat, which evolved as an instrument for providing legal aid. The institution

⁴ Mool Chand Sharma, Justice RN.Bhagwati, Court Constitution and Human Right, 1, (1995), Universal Book Traders.

⁵ George H. Gadbois, "The Supreme Court of India: As a political institution" in Rajeev Dhavan, R.Sudarshan & Salman Khurshid, Judge and Judiciary power, (1985) P-251

⁶ Upendra Baxi, The Indian Supreme Court, and politics, (1980)

of the judiciary not only influenced the enactment of the Legal Services Authority Act, of 1987 but was also determined so that the Act could be implemented all over the country with its true spirit.⁷ The judiciary even directed the Government to provide funds to NGOs to encourage people's participation through legal awareness, so that the Legal Aid program can succeed.⁸ It went on further directing the Government and Governmental organizations to hold permanent Lok Adalat in their concerned departments to settle the grievances of the citizens speedily and cost-effectively.⁹

Judiciary: A Path Provider for Lok-Adalat As Legal-Aid Strategy

In the landmark judgment of *the Hussainara Khatoon case*¹⁰, Justice Bhagwati spelled out the right to Legal Aid in criminal proceedings from the language of Article 21 and held that this is a Constitutional right of every accused person who is unable to engage a lawyer and secure legal services on account of reasons such as poverty, indigence or in-communicable situation and the State is under the mandate to provide a lawyer to an accused person, if the circumstances of the case and the needs of justice so require, provided accused person does not object to the provision of such lawyer. After two again reiterated similar views in the *Khetri case*,¹¹ The Supreme Court said, the state of affairs could be permitted to continue despite the decision of this Court. This Court has pointed out that the right to free Legal Services is an essential ingredient of fair and just fair and just procedure for a person accused of an offense and it must be held; implicit in the guarantee of article 21 and the state is under the constitutional mandate to provide a lawyer to an accused person if the circumstances of the case and the needs of justice so require. It is unfortunate that though this court declared the right to legal aid as a fundamental right of an accused person, by a process of judicial construction of Article 21, most of the States have not taken note of this decision. The Court directed the State Government to provide free legal services to the accused who is unable to provide lawyers on the grounds of poverty and indigence. The Court also directed the Magistrate and Session Judges to inform the accused about the availability of the Legal Aid.

⁷ In Supreme Court Legal Service Committee V. U.01 AIR 1998 SC 2940, The Court directed all the states those had not framed rules till that time, to frame rules and implement the Law constructively.

⁸ See Centre for Legal Research & Other V. State of Kerala. AIR 1986 SC 219

⁹ Abdul Hassan and N.L.S.A. V. Delhi Vidyut Board and others, AIR 1999 DEL 88

¹⁰ Hussainara Khatoon V. State of Bihar. AIR 1979 SC 1369

¹¹ Khatri & Others V. State of Bihar. AIR 1981 SC 928

Again in 1986, the Supreme Court enhanced the ambit of the Legal Aid to the Appellate Court.¹² The Court asked, 'whether the fundamental right could lawfully be denied to the appellants if they did not apply for free legal aid. Is the exercise of this fundamental right conditioned upon the accused applying for free legal assistance so that if he does not make an application for free legal assistance the trial may lawfully proceed without adequate legal representation being offered to him?' Supreme Court while setting aside the conviction order said: The result was that the appellants remained unrepresented by a lawyer and the trial ultimately resulted in their conviction. This was a violation of the fundamental right of the appellants under Article 21 and the trial must accordingly be held to be vitiated on account of total Constitutional infirmity, and the conviction and sentence recorded against the appellants must be set aside.

The most vital challenge before the judiciary was to provide access to justice to a large number of people in the country. Judiciary tried its best to provide access to justice to the downtrodden people. The significant statement made by former chief justice Dr. A.S. Anand about the process of access to justice through the means of social action litigation is noteworthy. To quote:

While the judiciary was striving for a balance between the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation, it found itself faced with a serious challenge concerning access to justice. It was noticed that the weaker section of Indian humanity had been deprived of justice for long years: they had no access to justice on account of their poverty, ignorance, and illiteracy. They were not aware of the rights and benefits conferred upon them by the Constitution and other beneficial legislations. On account of their socially and economically disadvantaged position, they could not assert their rights. Access to justice to protect their fundamental rights was almost illusory for such sections of Indian humanity. The judiciary rose to meet the challenge and regarded it as its duty to come to the rescue of the underprivileged to help them to reap the benefits of economic and social entitlement.¹³

Though social action litigation provides means for homeless people to access justice and to protect their rights through such instruments, even then the goal of access

¹² Sukh Das & Others V. Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh, AIR 1986 SC 991

¹³ Justice Dr. A.S. Anand, Fifty years of Indian Judiciary - Its achievements & failures, 19, NyayaDeep, April-June 2000.

to justice is an unfulfilled reality. Large numbers of people do not have access to justice primarily because of the high cost of the administration of the justice system. In such an aggravated situation and on the role of the judiciary, Justice Dr. A.S.Anand said:

The high cost of litigation is a challenge, which the judiciary has made attempts to meet though without any spectacular success. Even after decades of independence, the poor, backward, and weaker sections of the society feel that they do not have equal opportunities for securing justice because of their socio-economic conditions. The judiciary evolved schemes for providing legal aid to the poor A Committee for Implementation of Legal Aid Scheme (C/LAS) was set up by the judiciary to further the Directive Principles and assure 'equal protection of law' to the citizen.

The judgment in the *Hussainara Khatoon case*¹⁴ was pronounced in 1979 and the 1980 Committee for Implementation of Legal Aid Scheme (CILAS) was constituted by Justice Bhagwati who was appointed as the Chairman of the Committee. The CILAS started holding Lok-Adalat as a legal aid strategy. The working of the CILAS and all the aforesaid judgments made the Legislature bound to pass the Legal Services Authorities Act, of 1987. However, the Act came into force with effect on 9.11.1995. Thus the judicial efforts not only evolved the institution of Lok Adalat but also made the Legislature bound to provide legal backing to the institution of Lok Adalat.

Judiciary as Watchdog for Proper Implementation of Lok-Adalat Schemes

Though the Legal Services Authorities Act, of 1987 was passed and enforced through Central notification, the Part III of the Act was not enforced by most of the States. Part III of the Act provides directives for the formation of State Authority, District Authority, High Court Committee, and *Taluka* level Committee. Again, when most of the States have not implemented the law, which in result jeopardizes the object of the Act to provide Legal Services at the grass-root level and holding Lok-Adalat as a mechanism for providing legal services, the judiciary has to appear for materializing the aim and object of the Act. In *Supreme Court Legal Aid Committee V. Union of India*,¹⁵ the Supreme Court directed all the States and Union Territories, which have not framed the Rules so far, to frame Rules u/s. 28 and notify the same within two months. It also directed the States or Union Territory to the

¹⁴ *Hussainara Khatoon V. State of Bihar*. AIR 1979 sc 1369.

¹⁵ 1998 (5) SCC 762.

constitution of High Court Legal Services Committees and other Committees within two months and a compliance report was asked for by February 3, 1998. However, most of the States did not initially comply with the order and the matter again came up for hearing on 10th February 1998. The Court threatened to initiate contempt proceedings against the Chief Secretary of the concerned State. However, by extending some time, the court again directed the Union Territory and State Government to comply with the direction saying, 'We give in the meanwhile, time till 30.4.1998, to all the defaulting States/Union Territory Administration to comply full direction'.

Thus, the judiciary not only played a vital role in the enactment of the Act but also in the enforcement of the Act. The Judiciary does not even stop here, it goes further to constitute a permanent Lok-Adalat in different Governmental agencies, concerning public utility services. Delhi High Court in *Abul Hassan and N.L.S.A. V. Delhi Vidyut Board and others*¹⁶ highlighted the aim of the LSA Act and said

One of the aims of the Act is to organize Lok-Adalats to ensure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice based on equal opportunity. The Act gives statutory recognition to the resolution of disputes by compromise and settlement by the Lok-Adalat. The concept has been gathered from the system of Panchayat, which has roots in the history, and culture of this country. It has a native flavor known to the people.

The court further- highlighted the need for the Lok-Adalat and said that the need of the hour is practically beckoning for setting up Lok-Adalat on a permanent and continuous basis. What we do today will shape our tomorrow. The choice is between an overburdened Court system being crushed under its weight and the alternative dispute-resolving machinery including an impressive dispensation of justice by Lok-Adalat. The court further said that for facilitating expeditious disposal of all kinds of cases, permanent Lok-Adalat must be set up in DVB, MCD, NDMC, DDA, MTNL, GIG, and various departments of Government for resolving the disputes between the citizens and the Government of India and the Government of India and its employees. The court directed all such Governmental Agencies to establish Permanent Lok-Adalats.

¹⁶ AIR 1999 DEL 88

Now the 2002 Amendment of the Legal Service Authority Act, which mandates for constitution of permanent Lok-Adalat for resolving disputes in public utility service, is nothing but a materialization of the thought expressed by the Delhi High Court in 1999.

Legal Aid, Legal Literacy, Ngo, and Judiciary

Since the inception of the Lok-Adalat, as a Legal Aid strategy, the NGO played a critical role in mobilizing people of all segments, specifically the downtrodden people. Appreciating the functioning of the voluntary organization, Justice Bhagwati said:

If we want to secure people's participation and involvement in the legal aid program, we think the best way of securing is to operate through voluntary organizations and social action groups. These organizations are working among the deprived and vulnerable sections of the community at the grass-root level and they learn what are the problems and difficulties encountered by the neglected section of Indian humanity. They have their fingers on the pulse of the people and they know from their own experience what the unmet legal needs of the people are and what measures are necessary to be taken to end such exploitation and injustice and reach social or distributive justice for them.¹⁷

Even before the enactment of the Legal Service Authority Act, of 1987, the issue was raised before the Supreme Court as to whether voluntary organizations or social action groups engaged in legal aid programs should be supported by the State Government financially. Such issues which are normally considered in the purview of the executive, the Court transcends the boundary and directs the Government to provide funds to such NGOs. Supreme Court speaking through Justice Bhagwati held:

We, therefore, are definitely of the view that voluntary organizations and social action groups must be encouraged and supported by the State in operating the Legal Aid programs. It is now widely acknowledged throughout the country that the Legal Aid program, which is needed for reaching social justice for the people, cannot afford to remain confined to the traditional litigation-oriented legal programmer. But it must, taking into account the socio-economic conditions prevailing in the country, adopt more dynamic positive steps and take within its sweep what we call strategic legal aid programs, consisting of the promotion of

¹⁷ Centre of Legal Research and another V. State of Kerala. AIR 1986 Sc 2195

legal literacy, organization of legal aid camps, encouragement of PIL and holding Lok-Adalat for bringing about the settlement of disputes, whether pending in the Court or outside.

The judiciary not only paves the way for the moral encouragement of the NGOs but also arranges for their economic needs. The bold attempt of the judiciary will provide new energy to the Lok-Adalat movement vis-a-vis Ngo's participation in the movement.

Lok-Adalat in The Eyes of the Judiciary

Few cases appeared before the higher judiciary relating to Lok Adalat. In almost all cases judiciary discouraged appeal or revision against the compromise order passed by the Lok Adalat. However, a decade ago the Gujarat High Court set aside the decree passed by the Civil Judge on the compromise entered before Lok Adalat. The appellant contended that they did not agree on the compromise as is being imposed on them. If so, the High Court was justified in setting aside the order.¹⁵ However, caution is essential so that litigants with bad intentions cannot take alike pleas. In *Punjab National Bank V. Laxmi Chand Rai & others*,¹⁸ the Madhya Pradesh High Court dismissed the appeal filed against the decree passed by the Lok Adalat. In this case, during the negotiation before Lok Adalat, the official of the appellant bank agreed on the award consisting of the full dues amount as well as pendent lite interest and the period of installment left on the Lok Adalat to decide. The appellant argued that they never agreed on the installment and the rate of pendent lite interest is bad and unacceptable. The Court highlighted the aim and object of the Act and the provision of Sec. 21 of the Act, which debars appeal along with Sec. 96(3) of C.P.C., which also debars any appeal from a compromise decree. The court said that the Code of Civil Procedure intends that once a consent decree is passed by the Court, finality is attached to it. Such finality cannot be permitted to be destroyed, particularly under the Legal Services Authorities Act, as it would amount to defeating the very aim and object of the Act.

In *Kishan Rao v. Bidar District Legal Services Authority*¹⁹, the issue was raised as to whether the Lok Adalat could pass a decree when all the parties to the suit did not appear before Lok Adalat or any notice had been issued to them. A compromise was entered between the plaintiff and defendants 2 & 4 and accordingly, the Lok Adalat passed the decree. Whether the Lok Adalat right while passing the decree on the issue? Sec. 20(3) of the Act empowers the Lok-

¹⁸ AIR 2000 MP 30.

¹⁹ AIR 2001 Karnataka 407.

Adalat to proceed to dispose of the suit, proceeding, dispute or matter arrived at a compromise or settlement between the parties. The court interpreted the provision and said that the term "parties" used in the Section indicates all the parties in the suit. The court declared the decree illegal, null, and void and remanded the case for trial.

In another case,²⁰ the issue was raised as to whether the Court can refer the matter to the Lok Adalat if one party does not agree on such reference. The language of section 20 is clear which not only empowers the Court to refer the case, when one party files an application for reference, but also the Court can *suo-moto* refer the case to the Lok Adalat if the Court is satisfied that there are chances or possibilities of settlement. However, the proviso mandates the Court to provide opportunities to the other parties to place their views. The Court appreciated the view of referring the matter to the Lok-Adalat by saying:

The purpose of such a reference is to explore the possibility of conciliation with the mediation of an independent agency that has the expertise on that behalf and statutory backing for the decision. In a matter like the present one, it is the bounded duty of the Court to first explore the possibility of settlement. Such an approach alone would serve the legislative intent of creating Lok Adalats and providing them statutory backing for their decision. Any other view would not only frustrate the legislative intent but also result in affecting the authority of the Courts to the extent that it enables the Court to require the parties to submit to the jurisdiction of Lok- Adalat, in cases where the Courts are satisfied that the case is an appropriate case to be referred to the Lok-Adalat.

However, the Court forgets that the power of reference is for settlement of the dispute and when one party had refused for reference and had even come for appeal, on the face of it, looks like the case is not a fit one to be settled before Lok Adalat. Thus, in my opinion, for the sake of sending cases to Lok-Adalat, one cannot pressurize the party to refer the case, where the Court knows that the matter will again come back.

The Indian judiciary through its activist role when attempted to reform almost all sectors and evolve new jurisprudence for their materialization, the sector of Legal Aid vis-a-vis Lok Adalat is no exception to it. From the inception of the Lok Adalat movement, the judiciary played a significant role. It not only made its effect on the enactment of the Legal Services Authority

²⁰ Puspa Suresh Bhutada & other V. Subhash Bansilal Maheswari & Other, AIR 2002 Born 126.

Act but also reflected on the proper implementation of the Act. When the Executive fails to implement the statute in most the States, the judiciary appeared as a messiah and made it enforceable in such places. It also played the role of policymaker by directing the State to provide funds to different NGOs for such purposes.

Now when the Lok Adalat is functioning as an effective dispute resolution mechanism, the judiciary is working as a watchdog on the process so that no one can abuse the process. It is also rectifying the fault through judicial pronouncements. The 2002 amendment of the Act is nothing but the materialization of the verdict of the judiciary. So now it is in the process of expanding the scope of Lok Adalat.

Thus, the judiciary not only acted as the policymaker but also as executor. However, very few cases appear before the higher judiciary, so we have to look further to assess its role in the future. While directing the formation of an organization, like permanent Lok-Adalat, which the Legislature makes parallel to all almost adversary processes, except a few differentials in the procedure, the judiciary is required to takecaution. However, the judiciary attempted to provide modern additional means for the resolution of disputes but the legislature has molded it to a different tune. Now we have to see further, for its effective functioning. Again, the responsibility came on the shoulders of the judiciary to safeguard the institution from losing its basic characteristics and evolving newly developed processes to make it more effective.

CONCLUSION

Lok Adalat stands as a remarkable and evolving institution in the Indian legal landscape, striving to provide speedy and cost-effective justice to the common man. It represents a vital step towards realizing the constitutional principles of justice, equality, and access to justice for all. While not a replacement for the traditional judicial system, Lok Adalat serves as a complementary mechanism to alleviate the backlog of cases and encourage dispute resolution through conciliation and compromise.

The objectives of Lok Adalat, as outlined in the text, underscore its role in promoting reconciliation and fairness. It seeks to overcome hostility, reduce the burden on the conventional court system, and foster amicable settlements. Furthermore, Lok Adalat aligns with the principles of Swaraj and Sarvodaya, aiming to uplift the marginalized and ensure social, economic, and political justice.

The future of Lok Adalat faces certain challenges, notably in improving the quality of legal aid and expanding its reach to underserved populations. There is also a need for legislative modifications to enhance its jurisdiction and effectiveness, particularly in cases involving business disputes and government matters. Lok Adalat's success ultimately depends on granting it more authority to address contemporary issues.

The judiciary has played a pivotal role in shaping and upholding the Lok Adalat system. It not only advocated for its establishment but also ensured its proper implementation. The judiciary's proactive approach to promoting access to justice through Lok Adalat, legal literacy, and support for NGOs demonstrates its commitment to the cause of justice. The judiciary has acted as a guardian, policymaker, and executor in strengthening Lok Adalat as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism.

In the years ahead, Lok Adalat must continue to evolve and adapt to meet the changing needs of Indian society. It remains a promising avenue for resolving disputes efficiently and equitably, embodying the spirit of justice and equality enshrined in the Indian Constitution.