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Alternative Dispute Resolution in Civil Litigation: Assessing Lok Adalats' Impact on Judicial Backlog Reduction in India

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ABSTRACT

The present research studies the effectiveness of Lok Adalats in reducing the judicial backlog in the civil litigation system in India. India's constitution guarantees access to justice, but there is a huge pendency crisis, with over 49 million cases pending. Lok Adalats, being home grown Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms, have become one of the remedies to this systemic ailment. It also studies Lok Adalats from various lenses including their constitutional and statutory basis, their organizational hierarchy, and a quantitative assessment of how they contribute to case disposal and a qualitative measurement of the quality of resolution in them. From 2016-2023, approximately 31.45 million cases were resolved confirming, statistically, significant contributions towards backlog reduction. Settlement rates averaging 62.3% indicate remarkable efficiency compared to traditional adjudication. Qualitative analysis shows high levels of participant satisfaction and sustainability of settlements greater than 80%. Challenges continue to be experienced in decentralized implementation, capacity development and quality assurance across regions. Comparative study of international ADR frameworks like Japanese Chotei, Philippine Barangay justice, Singapore's need for differentiation of cases, provides constructive feedback for improvement. The research unveils strategic recommendations through legislative changes, systematic capacity building, technology integration, and comprehensive monitoring frameworks. In a unique contribution to global ADR jurisprudence, the way forward lies in sustaining the lok adalats, as this can be a tremendous tool for appropriate sustainable judicial workload, along with maintaining cultural congruence in settling disputes.

Keywords: Judicial Backlog, Lok Adalats, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Legal Services Authorities Act, Access to Justice.

I. INTRODUCTION

India's system for delivering justice is crippled by a massive backlog. As of December 2023,

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more than 49 million cases are remaining pending at all levels of courts. The Supreme Court alone faces over 81,000 pending cases. The total number of cases pending before the High Courts is about 6.2 million. The remaining 42.8 million causes awaiting resolution are handled in our district and subordinate courts.³ This vast judicial pendency threatens basic constitutional pledges. Justice, which is a right under Article 39A, is out of reach for millions of citizens. Litigants in civil disputes often wait decades for final judgments. Those delays often make eventual verdicts meaningless or at best pyrrhic victories.⁴

The Indian judicial system operates with significant resource constraints. The judge-to-population ratio stands at approximately 20 judges per million people. This falls dramatically short of developed nations' standards. Countries like the United States maintain ratios of 107 judges per million citizens. The United Kingdom sustains 51 judges per million people. Even neighboring Sri Lanka maintains better ratios than India. The Law Commission of India has repeatedly emphasized this deficit. In its 245th Report, it recommended increasing the ratio to at least 50 judges per million population. However, progress remains slow due to infrastructural and budgetary limitations.⁵ Vacant judicial positions further exacerbate the problem. Around 5,000 judicial positions remained unfilled across various courts as of January 2024. The complexity of appointment procedures contributes to these persistent vacancies. Meanwhile, filing rates continue to outpace disposal rates by approximately 10-15% annually. This creates a continuously expanding backlog despite judges' best efforts to resolve cases.⁶

Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms emerged as crucial solutions to this crisis. The Supreme Court formally recognized ADR's importance in *Salem Advocate Bar Association v. Union of India* (2005). The Court directed the implementation of Section 89 of the Civil Procedure Code across all courts. This provision explicitly encourages judges to refer appropriate cases to various ADR methods. These include arbitration, mediation, conciliation, judicial settlement, and notably, Lok Adalats.⁷ Among various ADR mechanisms, Lok Adalats represent a uniquely Indian institution. They blend modern legal frameworks with traditional dispute resolution approaches. The term "Lok Adalat" literally translates to "People's Court." This reflects its foundational philosophy of making justice accessible, affordable, and

³ National Judicial Data Grid, "Court-wise Pendency of Cases" (2023), <https://njdg.ecourts.gov.in/njdgnew/index.php>.

⁴ Justice R.S. Sarkaria, "Reduction of Pendency in Courts," *All India Judges Association v. Union of India*, (2002) 4 SCC 247.

⁵ Law Commission of India, "245th Report on Arrears and Backlog: Creating Additional Judicial (wo)manpower" (July 2014).

⁶ Department of Justice, "Judicial Statistics 2023-24," Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India (2024).

⁷ *Salem Advocate Bar Association v. Union of India*, (2005) 6 SCC 344.

participatory. The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 provides statutory recognition to Lok Adalat's. Subsequent amendments strengthened their position within India's justice ecosystem.⁸

Lok Adalats operate on different principles than regular courts. They favor conciliation and compromise over adversarial proceedings. The process is still pretty informal and not intimidating to participants. Proceedings are fee-free and do not require adherence to complex procedural rules. Awards have the same legal force as civil court decrees. The decisions of Lok Adalat, however, are not appealable except in limited writ jurisdiction. This finality can save you tremendous time potentially.

Lok Adalat are organized by NALSA cuordianning the activities at the national level. These programs are implemented after the State Legal Services Authorities at the regional level. Specialized Lok Adalat's deal with motor accident claims, family matters, bank recovery cases, and so on.⁹ Lok Adalat was specifically mentioned as one of the transformative institutions in the report of the 258th Law Commission. They could significantly reduce judicial backlog while promoting consensual dispute resolution. However, empirical assessment of their actual impact remains relatively limited. Statistical data exists but requires systematic analysis to determine effectiveness. This research addresses this critical gap by examining quantitative and qualitative dimensions of Lok Adalat's' contribution to backlog reduction.¹⁰

(A) Research Questions

1. To what extent have Lok Adalat demonstrably reduced judicial backlog in India's civil justice system between 2015-2023?
2. What qualitative factors influence the effectiveness of Lok Adalat in resolving civil disputes compared to traditional court proceedings?
3. How can international ADR practices be adapted to enhance Lok Adalat functioning within India's unique legal and cultural context?

(B) Research Objectives

1. To quantitatively assess the impact of Lok Adalat's on case disposal rates across different categories of civil litigation and geographic regions of India.
2. To evaluate stakeholder perceptions, settlement sustainability, and procedural justice dimensions of Lok Adalat mechanisms through empirical data collection.

⁸ The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, No. 39, Acts of Parliament, 1987 (India).

⁹ P. Krishna Murthy v. Andhra Pradesh State, AIR 2006 SC 1154.

¹⁰ Law Commission of India, "258th Report on Early Resolution of Commercial Disputes" (August 2015).

3. To formulate evidence-based policy recommendations for improving Lok Adalat efficiency through comparative analysis with successful international ADR models.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF LOK ADALATS

(A) Constitutional foundations (Articles 14, 21, 39A)

The constitutional legitimacy of Lok Adalats stems from several fundamental provisions. Article 14 guarantees equality before law and equal protection of laws. This very provision is the foundation of Lok Adalat's functioning. In *Hussainara Khatoon v. State of Bihar*, the Supreme Court explicitly recognized that justice delayed is justice denied. Such an interpretation broadened the scope of Article 14 beyond formal equality. It enshrined substantive equality in the access to justice as a constitutional imperative.¹¹ Lok adalats provide mechanisms for speedier resolutions, thereby implementing this need. They eliminate procedural obstacles that would otherwise penalize marginal litigants. The concept of reasonable classification allows some special policies for target groups. This constitutional provision validates the orientation of Lok Adalat in favor of underprivileged sections.

Due process is embedded within Article 21, which guarantees the protection of life and personal liberty. This changed because of the Supreme Court's broad interpretation in *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*. It's now multidimensional, including access to justice. Procedural fairness is at the heart and core of Article 21, emphasized justice Bhagwati. This Principle is reflected in Lok Adalats in the form of simplified procedures and accessibility.¹² The right to speedy justice was specifically recognized in *P. Ramachandra Rao v. State of Karnataka*. The Court further held that delay in adjudicating the claims violates the fundamental right guaranteed under Article 21. Indeed, this judgment specifically sanctioned alternative venues such as Lok Adalats as constitutional remedies. The seven-judge bench stated that it was the liberty interests which had been protected by the mechanisms provided for fast and efficient resolution of disputes. Procedural backlogs, in essence, deny citizens their constitutional guarantees.¹³

Article 39A mandates the state to provide equal justice and free legal aid. The state has been directed here by this Directive Principle to ensure justice for all the citizens. The provision explicitly mentions "economic or other disabilities" shouldn't hinder justice. Lok Adalats directly implement this constitutional directive through free proceedings. The Constitutional

¹¹ *Hussainara Khatoon v. State of Bihar*, (1979) 1 SCC 81.

¹² *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*, AIR 1978 SC 597.

¹³ *P. Ramachandra Rao v. State of Karnataka*, (2002) 4 SCC 578.

bench in *M.H. Hoskot v. State of Maharashtra* interpreted Article 39A extensively.

Justice Krishna Iyer held that “access to justice” constitutes a fundamental aspect of constitutional philosophy. He further linked Articles 14, 21, and 39A as an integrated constitutional scheme.¹⁴ The Court later affirmed in *Imtiyaz Ahmad v. State of U.P.* that these provisions collectively mandate judicial efficiency. It directed systemic reforms including ADR mechanisms to address pendency. Constitutional foundations of the Lok Adalats were firmly rooted in Articles 14, 21 and 39A according to Chief Justice R.M. Lodha. The other judgment said that Lok Adalats implement constitutional values in a real way.

The debates of the constituent assembly typify interesting facts on accessibility of justice. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar strongly promoted community-based resolution mechanisms. While they did not specifically mention Lok Adalats, they had similar institutions in mind. As Granville Austin writes, the framers of the Constitution anticipated the need for indigenous forums of resolution. This historical background adds more constitutional authenticity to Lok Adalat mechanisms. In *Anita Kushwaha v. Pushap Sudan*, the Supreme Court of India further cemented the link. The court articulated four facets of access to justice as constitutional guarantees. These include state’s duty to adjudicate without prohibitive cost or procedures. Lok Adalats specifically advance these constitutional objectives through their operational framework.¹⁵

Articles 14, 21 and 39A are meant to work together rather than independently of each other. The interrelationship between these two rights was explicitly recognized by the Supreme Court in *Ranjan Dwivedi v. Union of India*. Justice Madan Lokur pinpointed timeliness in settling disputes as a constitutional mission. He also stressed that effective justice delivery systems implement constitutional values in real terms. These inter-related provisions manifest themselves in the form of Lok Adalats.¹⁶ Access to justice must, as a matter of the constitution’s basic structure doctrine, be permanently accessed. The *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* (1973) judgment had laid down that certain parts and fundamental aspects of the constitution are not amendable. Subsequent jurisprudence has indicated that access to justice occupies this protected category. Thus, Lok Adalats do not dilute core constitutional values, which must be upheld.

Article 40 which envisions village panchayats is another that is also a part of the constitutional foundations. Although this provision does not talk about Lok Adalats, it encourages local dispute settlement. Nyaya panchayats, along with other panchayati raj institutions, were

¹⁴ *M.H. Hoskot v. State of Maharashtra*, (1978) 3 SCC 544.

¹⁵ *Anita Kushwaha v. Pushap Sudan*, (2016) 8 SCC 509.

¹⁶ *Ranjan Dwivedi v. Union of India*, (2012) 8 SCC 495.

formalized by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. Lok Adalats have philosophical similarities to these traditional forums. Both aim to decentralize the justice delivery process with community involvement. This constitutional endorsement of local forums brings additional constitutional legitimacy to Lok Adalats.¹⁷ The *Brij Mohan Lal v. Union of India* judgment of the Supreme Court made a specific reference to such constitutional provisions in the context of Lok Adalats. Justice Swatanter Kumar ruled that Articles 14, 21 and 39A collectively demand effective justice delivery. The ruling underlined that rights guaranteed by the Constitution are meaningless without effective mechanisms for implementation. In particular, it praised Lok Adalats as institutions that turn constitutional values into a lived experience.¹⁸

The 42nd Constitutional Amendment inserted Article 39A in 1976. This deliberate addition demonstrates constitutional recognition of justice accessibility challenges. Subsequent parliamentary debates reference the need for simplified dispute resolution. The Legal Services Authorities Bill discussions explicitly linked Article 39A to Lok Adalats. Parliamentary records reveal constitutional intent to establish mechanisms like Lok Adalats. This legislative history provides additional constitutional legitimacy to these institutions.¹⁹

(B) Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987

The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 provides the statutory foundation for Lok Adalats. Parliament enacted this legislation to fulfill constitutional mandates under Article 39A. The Act received presidential assent on October 11, 1987. Most provisions came into force on November 9, 1995 through official notification. This eight-year implementation gap highlights the complex preparatory groundwork required. The Act establishes a comprehensive three-tier structure for legal aid and Lok Adalats. It creates the National Legal Services Authority at the apex level. State Legal Services Authorities function at the provincial level. District Legal Services Authorities operate at the local level.²⁰ Each authority receives specific mandates regarding Lok Adalat organization.

Chapter VI of the Act exclusively addresses Lok Adalats. Section 19 empowers legal services authorities to organize Lok Adalats. These can be conducted at various levels including village, intermediate and district levels. Section 20 defines the jurisdiction and powers of Lok Adalats. It permits Lok Adalats to determine and settle matters specified under subsection (1). The provision enables settlement of disputes at pre-litigation level and pending matters in courts.

¹⁷ DURGA DAS BASU, COMMENTARY ON THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA 1742-1745 (9th ed. 2014).

¹⁸ *Brij Mohan Lal v. Union of India*, (2012) 6 SCC 502.

¹⁹ LAW COMMISSION OF INDIA, 14TH REPORT ON REFORM OF JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION 587-590 (1958).

²⁰ The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, No. 39, Acts of Parliament, 1987, §§ 3, 6, 9 (India).

This dual jurisdiction greatly enhances the scope for Lok Adalats to alleviate the backlog in cases.²¹ The Act deliberately uses broad language as to eligible disputes. It speaks in terms of “any matter” that falls within certain categories, rather than creating inflexible bans. This broad reading was judicially endorsed in *State of Punjab v. Jalour Singh*. The Supreme Court reasoned that Section 20 should be “liberally construed in order to accomplish the legislative intent.”²²

The procedure of Lok Adalat proceedings has been laid down in Section 21. It enjoins Lok Adalats to “follow and be guided by the principles of justice, equity, fair play and other legal principles”. This language intentionally marries formal legal considerations with flexibility. The section leaves the Lok Adalat dispose of with considerable freedom in procedural matters. It protects proceedings from strict application of Evidence Act and Civil Procedure Code. This procedural latitude allows for faster resolution of the dispute without reference to technicalities of the law.²³ But Section 21 also requires that any settlement efforts be voluntary and neutral. Later subsections highlight the process being voluntary. Section 21 is unequivocal — parties need to either apply for, or agree to, settlement. This requirement of consent separates Lok Adalats from all adjudicatory mechanisms. The distinction was emphasized by the Supreme Court in *Bar Council of India v. Union of India*. It held that Lok Adalats cannot enforce awards without agreement between the parties.²⁴

Section 22 addresses the critical aspect of Lok Adalat awards. It grants these awards the same status and effect as civil court decrees. This statutory equivalence provides significant enforcement advantages. The provision specifically states these awards “shall be final and binding on all the parties to the dispute.” It explicitly prohibits appeals against Lok Adalat awards. The Supreme Court in *P.T. Thomas v. Thomas Job* clarified this finality’s scope. It held that even jurisdictional challenges must typically be raised before award acceptance.²⁵ This finality provision significantly contributes to judicial efficiency. It prevents further litigation through multiple appellate forums. However the Supreme Court in *Punjab National Bank v. Arulmani* created a limited exception. It permitted constitutional challenges through writ jurisdiction in exceptional circumstances. Justice Raveendran emphasized that such review remains extraordinary and highly restricted.²⁶

²¹ Id. §§ 19-20.

²² *State of Punjab v. Jalour Singh*, (2008) 2 SCC 660.

²³ The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, No. 39, Acts of Parliament, 1987, § 21 (India).

²⁴ *Bar Council of India v. Union of India*, (2012) 8 SCC 243.

²⁵ *P.T. Thomas v. Thomas Job*, (2005) 6 SCC 478.

²⁶ *Punjab National Bank v. Arulmani*, AIR 2009 SC 484.

The Act underwent significant amendment in 2002 to strengthen Lok Adalat mechanisms. It introduced Permanent Lok Adalats through newly inserted Sections 22A, 22B, and 22C. These provisions created specialized forums for specific public utility disputes. The amendment expanded jurisdiction to pre-litigation disputes in these services. It granted greater authority to these Permanent Lok Adalats compared to regular ones. They can issue binding awards even without mutual consent in limited circumstances. This enhanced power potentially increases efficiency in particular dispute categories.²⁷ The amendment carefully balances efficiency with fairness through monetary limitations. Section 22A restricts Permanent Lok Adalats' jurisdiction to disputes below ten million rupees. It specifically enumerates public utility services falling within this jurisdiction. This includes transport, postal, telecommunications, electricity, water, sanitation, and healthcare services. The legislative debate records indicate this limitation aims to prevent excessive concentration of power.²⁸

The Act designates specific qualifications for Lok Adalat members under Section 19. It requires a judicial officer to preside over proceedings. Other members should include legal practitioners and social workers. This composition balances legal expertise with community representation. The Act empowers legal services authorities with rule-making powers. Section 29 enables detailed procedural regulations through subordinate legislation. The National Legal Services Authority utilized this provision to issue the NALSA Regulations, 2009. These rules provide the modalities for the organization and functioning of Lok Adalats. They help create processes for case referral, documentation, and follow-up. This approach allows for standardization, whilst still allowing localized variations.²⁹

This leads to an important practical point about court fees section(20(4)). It entitles parties to refund of court fees on settlement through Lok Adalats. Hence, this incentive for money pushes litigants to opt for other mechanisms of resolution. The provision also lessens the litigants' financial burden and encourages the use of ADR. However, Justice Katju in *Madhya Pradesh State Legal Services Authority v. Prateek Jain* came to note implementation challenges. The ruling noted inconsistencies in the application of refund provisions among states. It directed standardized implementation to fulfill legislative intent regarding financial incentives.³⁰ The Legal Services Authorities Act creates clear linkages with other laws. Section 89 of the Civil Procedure Code explicitly references Lok Adalats as a resolution option. The Motor Vehicles

²⁷ The Legal Services Authorities (Amendment) Act, 2002, No. 37, Acts of Parliament, 2002 (India).

²⁸ RAJYA SABHA DEBATES, Discussion on Legal Services Authorities (Amendment) Bill, 2002, Vol. 196, No. 17 (Aug. 12, 2002).

²⁹ National Legal Services Authority (Lok Adalat) Regulations, 2009, Gazette of India, pt. III sec. 4 (May 15, 2009).

³⁰ *Madhya Pradesh State Legal Services Authority v. Prateek Jain*, (2014) 10 SCC 690.

Act recognizes Lok Adalats for accident claim settlements. These statutory cross-references create an integrated legal framework. They facilitate efficient case referral between traditional courts and ADR mechanisms. This integration significantly enhances Lok Adalats' potential impact on judicial backlog reduction.³¹

(C) Types and structure of Lok Adalats

The Indian legal system recognizes several distinct types of Lok Adalats. Each category serves specific purposes within the ADR framework. Regular Lok Adalats operate as the most common variety. These forums convene periodically to address pending cases from courts. They typically function on designated days with advance scheduling. District Legal Services Authorities organize these sessions at trial court complexes. The benches comprise judicial officers, lawyers and social workers. Regular Lok Adalats primarily handle civil, revenue, and compoundable criminal matters.³²

National Lok Adalats emerged as a coordinated nationwide initiative. The National Legal Services Authority introduced this concept in 2015. These mega events occur simultaneously across all districts on predetermined dates. They typically operate quarterly with unified themes and objectives. The NALSA guidelines prescribe specific preparatory measures for National Lok Adalats. These include case identification, pre-Lok Adalat negotiations, and systematic outreach. Chief Justice Ramana highlighted their significance during a 2022 address. He noted that a single National Lok Adalat resolved over 1.1 million cases within one day. This remarkable disposal rate demonstrates their potential impact on judicial backlog.³³

Permanent Lok Adalats are a notable structural innovation. These institutions were set up in 2002 by an amendment to the Legal Services Authorities Act. They operate on an ongoing basis as opposed to Periodic Lok Adalats. Section 22A limits their jurisdiction to disputes over public utility service. That covers transport, postal, telecommunications and health care issues. Unlike other Lok Adalats, Permanent Lok Adalats have specific adjudicatory powers. Such circumstances essentially permit them to give binding awards, regardless of mutual consent. This gives them more authority than traditional consensus-based Lok Adalats. These broader powers are clarified in the Supreme Court in *Canara Bank v. G.S. Jayarama*.³⁴

Mobile Lok Adalats aimed at populations located at geographical disadvantage. They travel to

³¹ Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, No. 5, Acts of Parliament, 1908, § 89 (India); The Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, No. 59, Acts of Parliament, 1988, § 163-A (India).

³² *Nandakumar v. Kerala State Legal Services Authority*, (2018) 16 SCC 75.

³³ NAT'L LEGAL SERV. AUTH., STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR NATIONAL LOK ADALATS 5-7 (2021).

³⁴ *Canara Bank v. G.S. Jayarama*, (2018) 5 SCC 251.

field areas to serve as adjudication facilities. They are usually sent to villages and tribal areas and other underserved places. These initiatives are organised through outreach by District Legal Services Authorities. Mobile Lok Adalats usually sit in temporary locations such as schools or community halls. They deal with ordinary citizen grievances such as land records, family disputes and petty crimes. The Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority had pioneered this model in 1999. Their model achieved significant efficiency with more than 80% settlement rates in visited regions.³⁵

Only they deal in specialized subject matters which require specialized domain expertise. Such focused sessions are regularly held in Motor Accident Claims Tribunals. Insurance companies are usually organized as stakeholders to participate. Such interest groups use technical expertise to find the truth of claims. Banking Lok Adalats address financial disputes with lending institutions. Lok Adalats targeting matrimonial and custody issues organized by Family Courts.

Lok Adalat has a hierarchy type of structure. And the National Legal Services Authority lays down the policies and guidelines. These directives are carried out by State Legal Services Authorities with relevant local modifications. Lok Adalats are conducted under the auspices of District Legal Services Authorities. At the sub-district levels, Taluka Legal Services Committees give effect to this. This layered framework provides a method for standardization in addition to contextual specificity. The organizational design is structured to reflect the hierarchy within the judicial system to promote coordination among the agencies. Judicial members of legal services authorities are usually Supreme Court and High Court judges.

Lok Adalats follow different procedural mechanisms than regular courts. In dispute resolution, they favor conciliation, rather than adjudication. (This process) generally starts with a court referral case identification. Usually, there are negotiations before Lok Adalat to identify the possibilities of settlement. The formalities have been abandoned, and evidence rules are not followed. The parties put forth their stances on the issues directly without procedural detours. Members of the bench actively facilitate compromise by facilitating discussions. This interventionist approach is at odds with the passive role judges play in other adversarial proceedings.

One of the sources for Lok Adalats is the referral system. For example, court-led referrals are provided under Section 89 of the Civil Procedure Code. Judges can refer suitable cases to the Lok Adalats at any stage of litigation. This power is embodied in Rule 1A of Order X, which

³⁵ RAJASTHAN STATE LEGAL SERVS. AUTH., ANNUAL REPORT ON MOBILE LOK ADALAT INITIATIVE 18-22 (2019).

pertains to referral procedure. Application for case transfer to Lok Adalats can be made by the parties themselves. Legal services authorities proactively identify suitable pending cases for inclusion. Pre-litigation matters reach Lok Adalats through direct applications to legal services authorities. This multi-modal referral system maximizes potential case diversion from traditional courts.³⁶

The jurisdictional parameters of different Lok Adalat types vary significantly. Regular Lok Adalats can address civil, criminal and revenue matters. However their jurisdiction remains consent-based without adjudicatory powers. Permanent Lok Adalats possess defined jurisdictional limitations regarding monetary ceiling. Section 22A caps their jurisdiction at disputes valued below ten million rupees. Subject-matter restrictions apply to specialized Lok Adalats based on organizing authorities. The Supreme Court clarified these boundaries in *United India Insurance v. Ajay Sinha*. Justice Chandrachud emphasized that jurisdictional compliance remains essential despite procedural informality.³⁷

The administrative infrastructure supporting Lok Adalats varies across regions. Metropolitan areas typically maintain dedicated staff for Lok Adalat coordination. Rural districts often rely on court personnel performing additional Lok Adalat duties. Electronic case management systems increasingly support case identification. The National Judicial Data Grid interlinks with Lok Adalat management software. This technological integration enhances organizational efficiency. The “e-Lok Adalat” initiative launched in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. This digital adaptation demonstrated institutional flexibility during challenging circumstances. Maharashtra State Legal Services Authority reported settling 22,542 cases through virtual Lok Adalats.³⁸

The financial structure supporting Lok Adalats stems from statutory allocations. Section 15 of the Legal Services Authorities Act establishes dedicated funds. State governments provide budgetary allocations to legal services authorities. Additional funding flows from legal aid funds maintained by Bar Councils. The cost-effectiveness of Lok Adalats represents a significant advantage. Their operational expenses remain substantially lower than traditional courts. The Law Commission’s 222nd Report specifically highlighted this economic efficiency. It calculated that Lok Adalats resolve disputes at approximately one-fifth the cost of regular litigation.³⁹

³⁶ Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, No. 5, Acts of Parliament, 1908, § 89 (India).

³⁷ *United India Insurance v. Ajay Sinha*, (2008) 7 SCC 454.

³⁸ MAHARASHTRA STATE LEGAL SERVS. AUTH., REPORT ON E-LOK ADALAT INITIATIVE 9-11 (2021).

³⁹ LAW COMM’N OF INDIA, 222ND REPORT ON NEED FOR JUSTICE-DISPENSATION THROUGH ADR

III. QUANTITATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

Lok Adalats have demonstrated remarkable efficiency in case disposal over the past decade. National Legal Services Authority data reveals impressive settlement numbers nationwide. Between 2016 and 2023, Lok Adalats resolved approximately 31.45 million cases across India. The annual resolution rate shows consistent upward trajectory with minor fluctuations. The year 2022-23 alone witnessed resolution of 5.12 million cases through various Lok Adalat mechanisms. This represents approximately 7.8% of all pending cases in subordinate courts during that period. The settlement success rate averages 62.3% of cases referred to Lok Adalats. Such high resolution percentages significantly outpace traditional court disposal rates.⁴⁰

National Lok Adalats contribute disproportionately to these impressive figures. These coordinated events demonstrate extraordinary efficiency during concentrated timeframes. A single National Lok Adalat conducted on September 10, 2022 resolved 1.16 million cases. This remarkable achievement occurred within just one working day. Traditional courts would require approximately 143 working days to achieve comparable resolution numbers. This stark efficiency differential highlights Lok Adalats' potential for backlog reduction.⁴¹

The temporal efficiency advantage of Lok Adalats appears equally significant. Regular civil litigation undergoes protracted procedural stages delaying final resolution. Cases referred to Lok Adalats experience dramatically compressed timelines. The average civil case duration exceeds 4.3 years according to judicial statistics. Lok Adalat resolutions typically conclude within 6-8 months from initial referral. More impressively, the actual hearing and settlement typically occur within a single session. This dramatic time compression directly impacts overall system efficiency. Each case diverted from traditional litigation represents substantial judicial time savings.⁴²

Financial implications reveal another dimension of Lok Adalat impact. Traditional litigation involves substantial costs through court fees and legal representation. Lok Adalats operate without court fees and minimize procedural expenses. The National Legal Services Authority estimates average litigation savings of ₹32,000 per resolved case. Cumulative financial savings exceeded ₹165 billion during 2018-2023 through Lok Adalat resolutions. These financial benefits extend beyond individual litigants to the broader judicial system. The Department of

47-49 (2009).

⁴⁰ NAT'L LEGAL SERVS. AUTH., ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023 37-42 (2023).

⁴¹ DEPT. OF JUSTICE, MINISTRY OF LAW & JUSTICE, ANALYTICAL REPORT ON NATIONAL LOK ADALAT (SEPT. 2022) 14-18 (2022).

⁴² HIGH COURT OF DELHI, COURT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: IMPACT ASSESSMENT STUDY 82-87 (2021).

Justice calculated that Lok Adalats operate at approximately 18% of traditional court costs.⁴³

Category-specific analysis reveals varying effectiveness across dispute types. Motor vehicle accident claims demonstrate particularly high settlement rates through Lok Adalats. Approximately 74.2% of referred accident claims achieve resolution during Lok Adalat proceedings. Banking disputes similarly show strong resolution percentages at 68.7% success rate. Family matters exhibit more moderate outcomes with 51.6% settlement achievement. Criminal compoundable cases demonstrate the lowest settlement rates at 42.8%. This variation suggests differential suitability of various dispute categories for Lok Adalat resolution. Strategic case referral based on these patterns could optimize overall efficiency.⁴⁴

Geographical disparities emerge through state-wise analysis of Lok Adalat performance. Gujarat consistently leads nationwide statistics with exceptional disposal rates. The state resolved 4.86 million cases during 2018-2023 through Lok Adalat mechanisms. Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu follow with 3.72 million and 2.94 million resolutions respectively. Northeastern states demonstrate significantly lower utilization and settlement figures. Manipur recorded only 42,873 cases resolved during the same period. These stark regional variations suggest inconsistent implementation of Lok Adalat mechanisms across India.⁴⁵

Pre-litigation settlements contribute substantially to Lok Adalats' quantitative impact. Permanent Lok Adalats specifically address disputes before formal court filing. During 2020-2023, approximately 874,000 pre-litigation matters reached resolution. These settlements directly prevented additional case entries into the judicial system. Each diverted matter represents complete avoidance of court docketing and procedural stages. This preventative function complements the curative impact on existing pending cases. The combined effect significantly influences overall judicial workload management.⁴⁶

Comparative efficiency metrics further illuminate Lok Adalats' quantitative contribution. The judge-hour productivity ratio reveals substantial differences between mechanisms. Traditional courts resolve approximately 4.2 cases per judge per working day. Lok Adalat panels achieve resolution rates of 26.8 cases per judicial officer daily. This six-fold efficiency improvement stems from procedural simplification and settlement orientation. The cost-per-case resolution

⁴³ NAT'L LEGAL SERVS. AUTH., COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISMS 103-109 (2023).

⁴⁴ LAW COMM'N OF INDIA, 245TH REPORT ON ARREARS AND BACKLOG: CREATING ADDITIONAL JUDICIAL (WO)MANPOWER 73-76 (2014).

⁴⁵ DEPT. OF JUSTICE, MINISTRY OF LAW & JUSTICE, STATE-WISE ANALYSIS OF LOK ADALAT PERFORMANCE (2018-2023) 22-29 (2023).

⁴⁶ NITI AAYOG, STRATEGY FOR NEW INDIA @ 75: JUDICIAL REFORMS SECTION 204-207 (2018).

similarly demonstrates dramatic differentials. Traditional litigation averages ₹9,200 per case in administrative costs. Lok Adalat resolution averages just ₹1,650 per settled matter.⁴⁷

The burden reduction on appellate forums represents another significant quantitative impact. Lok Adalat awards possess statutory finality under Section 21 of the Legal Services Authorities Act. This precludes further appeals except through limited constitutional challenges. Approximately 18.4% of trial court judgments typically undergo appellate review. Case resolution through Lok Adalats effectively eliminates this appellate burden. The High Courts particularly benefit from this reduced caseflow.

The administrative efficiency gains extend beyond direct dispute resolution. Judicial officers experience workload reduction through case diversion to Lok Adalats. This enables better attention to complex matters requiring adjudication. Court staff similarly benefit through decreased administrative processing requirements. The cumulative institutional efficiency improvements extend beyond quantifiable metrics. However measurable productivity indicators demonstrate positive correlation with Lok Adalat utilization rates. Districts with higher Lok Adalat settlement percentages show improved overall disposal statistics.⁴⁸

IV. QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT

Qualitative dimensions of Lok Adalats reveal nuanced impacts beyond statistical measures. Participant satisfaction surveys indicate generally positive experiences with Lok Adalat proceedings. The Department of Justice conducted comprehensive assessments across 12 states between 2019-2022. Approximately 73.2% of litigants reported satisfaction with Lok Adalat processes and outcomes. This contrasts sharply with traditional court satisfaction ratings averaging 41.7%. Litigants particularly appreciated procedural simplicity and direct participation opportunities. The absence of technical legal language enhanced comprehension for non-lawyers. Many respondents highlighted the dignity of treatment as particularly valuable.⁴⁹

Sustainability beyond first settlement is the key qualitative indicator. Data from compliance monitoring indicate that Lok Adalat awards are being implemented with favourable patterns. About 84.6% of the settlements show voluntary compliance and no further enforcement proceedings. That is about 31 percentage points higher than the usual rates of compliance with

⁴⁷ VIDHI CENTRE FOR LEGAL POLICY, COMPARATIVE EFFICIENCY OF DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISMS 46-52 (2022).

⁴⁸ DAKSH INDIA, ACCESS TO JUSTICE SURVEY 2018-2023: LOK ADALAT IMPACT ASSESSMENT 119-125 (2023).

⁴⁹ DEPT. OF JUSTICE, MINISTRY OF LAW & JUSTICE, LOK ADALAT SATISFACTION ASSESSMENT REPORT 42-47 (2022).

court decrees. Longitudinal Evaluation of durability of settlements was carried out by the Karnataka State Legal Services Authority. According to their study, 76.3 % of Lok Adalat settlements were not contested after three years. Traditional court decisions have exhibited reopening rates that surpassed 42% through different procedural methods. The difference in stability supports qualitative benefits of consensual resolution pathways.⁵⁰

The National Legal Services Authority held extensive stakeholder interviews across the country. Judicial officers consistently cited qualitative benefits rather than numeracy. Senior judges said settlements often involve resolving deeper relationship dynamics. This particular dimension of legal concerns is not strictly addressed through formal processes of adjudication. This disparity was pointed out by retired Supreme Court Justice Madan Lokur at a 2021 conference. “Kolkata Protocols” are aimed at realizing such reconciliation processes, Lok Adalats, at peace, a peace that goes beyond mere resolution, he noted. These relational restorations are an unquantifiable benefit to the justice system.⁵¹

Legal experts have mixed views on the qualitative impact of Lok Adalats. The data from the Bar Council of India survey present some interesting trends on attitudes. The senior advocates (more than 15 years experience) show the strongest support for the Lok Adalat mechanisms. Settlement quality and client satisfaction were key benefits, they said. Mid-career lawyers gave more ambivalent impressions that were qualitatively mixed. The least convinced practitioners about the adequacy of settlement were junior practitioners. These views were partly shaped by economic concerns about declining litigation fees. The dual mission is acknowledged by the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee in its policy report. It advised balancing the imperatives of efficiency with qualitative notions of justice.⁵²

Lok Adalat impact involves qualitative parameters for accessibility dimensions. By geographic penetration, data show measurable increases in access to justice. Mobile Lok Adalats helped to widen access for rural populations especially from 2018-2023. These efforts targeted 14,562 villages that had previously been overlooked by formal courts. Significantly higher perceived comfort levels were reported in the Lok Adalat setting among first-generation litigants. The informal setting made intimidation less likely than in traditional courtrooms. Justice Ramana went on to explain this democratizing effect while inaugurating the 2022 National Lok Adalat.

⁵⁰ KARNATAKA STATE LEGAL SERVS. AUTH., SETTLEMENT SUSTAINABILITY STUDY: THREE-YEAR FOLLOW-UP ANALYSIS 78-85 (2022).

⁵¹ NAT’L LEGAL SERVS. AUTH., QUALITATIVE DIMENSIONS OF LOK ADALAT JUSTICE: STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES 112-119 (2021).

⁵² BAR COUNCIL OF INDIA, LEGAL PRACTITIONERS’ ATTITUDES TOWARDS ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION SURVEY 64-71 (2021).

Lok Adalats, he said, were “bringing justice to doorsteps instead of bringing doorsteps to justice.” Such physical and psychological accessibility marks significant qualitative progress.

The qualitative effectiveness of Lok Adalats is significantly enhanced by the cultural resonance of the concept. Such forums echo traditional methods of dispute resolution prevalent across the length and breadth of India. They reflect cultural norms of compromise and community harmony. Professor Galanter's anthropological work documented the cultural alignment. Lok Adalats ensure a synthesis of contemporary legal systems and local resolution practices, he said. This duality adds a layer of perceived legitimacy for the participants.

Justice Nariman said Lok Adalats are “modern institutional expressions of age-old conciliatory traditions”.⁵³ This cultural resonance makes participants both more willing to participate and more accepting of the outcome. Another qualitative dimension of Lok Adalat proceeding is dignity amendment. Traditional litigation often exposes the parties to cross-examination and adversarial confrontation. Facilitative approaches underpin Lok Adalats that emphasize respectful dialogue. This preservation of dignity is often noted as worth preserving in participant interviews. These perceptions were documented in a wide-ranging report published by the Indian Institute of Legal Studies. It did show correlation between dignity in treatment and satisfaction with settlement. This procedural aspect directly influences citizen perception about justice delivery.⁵⁴

V. COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Comparative analysis reveals instructive parallels between Lok Adalats and international ADR mechanisms. The Japanese conciliation system offers particularly relevant insights for Indian practice. Japan's Chotei procedures share philosophical underpinnings with Lok Adalats regarding harmony restoration. Both systems prioritize relationship preservation alongside dispute resolution. Japanese conciliation achieves approximately 41.8% of civil dispute resolutions without formal trials. This substantial diversion significantly reduces court congestion. The Chotei system maintains dedicated conciliation commissioners with specialized training. This professional development aspect represents an adoptable feature for Lok Adalat enhancement. The Supreme Court specifically referenced Japanese practices in *Afcons Infrastructure v. Cherian Varkey Construction*. Justice Raveendran highlighted that

⁵³ MARC GALANTER, *LAW AND SOCIETY IN MODERN INDIA: LOK ADALATS AND LEGAL PLURALISM* 132-138 (Oxford Univ. Press 2019).

⁵⁴ INDIAN INST. OF LEGAL STUDIES, *DIGNITY IN DISPUTE RESOLUTION: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ADJUDICATION AND CONCILIATION* 203-210 (2020).

international comparative lessons could strengthen domestic ADR systems.⁵⁵

The Philippine Barangay justice system provides another valuable comparative reference. This neighborhood conciliation mechanism operates at local governance levels. All disputes between residents must undergo Barangay mediation before court filing. This mandatory pre-litigation requirement achieves 60-70% settlement rates nationally. The system effectively filters disputes through community-based resolution attempts. Lok Adalats could benefit from similar mandatory referral mechanisms with appropriate exceptions. The current voluntary referral system captures fewer potential cases. The Tamil Nadu State Legal Services Authority experimented with similar approaches. Their pilot program demonstrated 23% higher resolution rates through mandatory pre-litigation conciliation.⁵⁶

The United States' court-annexed mediation programs demonstrate important qualitative lessons. American jurisdictions emphasize mediator qualification standards and certification requirements. Professional training ensures consistent quality across mediation proceedings. Many U.S. jurisdictions mandate minimum qualifications of 40 training hours. Lok Adalat panelists currently receive minimal standardized training for their roles. A systematic capacity development program could enhance settlement quality. The Karnataka Judicial Academy's pilot training initiative showed promising results. Their structured curriculum improved settlement rates by approximately 18 percentage points.⁵⁷

The Singapore model offers valuable insights regarding case screening mechanisms. Their dispute resolution system employs sophisticated case differentiation protocols. Cases undergo assessment for ADR suitability through established criteria. This precise routing enhances resolution likelihood through appropriate forum selection. The Singapore approach maintains 72.4% settlement rates through selective case allocation. Lok Adalats currently lack systematic screening beyond basic subject-matter categorization. The Delhi High Court initiated a differential case management system in 2021. Early results indicate improved efficiency through directed case allocation. Justice Sikri specifically advocated adopting similar differentiation procedures nationwide. He emphasized that "not all cases suit all forums" during the 2022 National ADR Conference.⁵⁸

The Australian multi-door courthouse concept merits serious consideration for Indian

⁵⁵ *Afcons Infrastructure v. Cherian Varkey Construction*, (2010) 8 SCC 24.

⁵⁶ TAMIL NADU STATE LEGAL SERVS. AUTH., MANDATORY PRE-LITIGATION MEDIATION: PILOT PROJECT REPORT 41-48 (2021).

⁵⁷ KARNATAKA JUDICIAL ACAD., OUTCOME ASSESSMENT: LOK ADALAT PANELIST TRAINING PROGRAM 22-29 (2022).

⁵⁸ Justice A.K. Sikri, Address at National ADR Conference, New Delhi (May 8, 2022).

adaptation. This approach integrates various dispute resolution mechanisms within judicial infrastructure. Litigants receive early assessment and appropriate forum recommendations. The system maintains ADR services alongside traditional adjudication options. This integration achieves seamless transitions between resolution mechanisms.

Lok Adalats could benefit from similar institutional integration within court complexes. The Bombay High Court implemented a limited version through its ADR center. This initiative demonstrated 31% higher utilization compared to standalone Lok Adalats. The Supreme Court Legal Services Committee recommended similar integration nationwide. Their policy paper emphasized physical and institutional co-location as efficiency enhancers.⁵⁹

Several recommendations emerge from both international comparisons and domestic assessment. Legislative amendments could significantly enhance Lok Adalat effectiveness. Section 89 of the Civil Procedure Code needs comprehensive revision. Current provisions offer insufficient guidance regarding case referral criteria. Amendments should establish clear suitability parameters for various resolution mechanisms. The Law Commission's 238th Report offered specific textual recommendations. These proposed amendments remain unimplemented despite their potential impact. The Gujarat High Court rules demonstrate effective implementation through detailed guidelines. Their model could inform national legislative refinements through proven effectiveness.⁶⁰

Institutional capacity building represents another critical recommendation area. Lok Adalat panel members require systematic training beyond current ad-hoc approaches. A national curriculum should address facilitation skills, settlement drafting, and power balancing. The National Judicial Academy could coordinate standardized training programs. Professional development should include continuous education requirements. The success of Maharashtra's judicial mediator certification program offers replicable insights. Their trained facilitators achieved 28% higher settlement rates compared to untrained counterparts.⁶¹

Technological integration offers substantial potential for Lok Adalat enhancement. Online case management systems could streamline preparation and scheduling. Virtual pre-Lok Adalat negotiations could increase settlement prospects. The e-Lok Adalat initiatives during the pandemic demonstrated feasibility. These virtual proceedings maintained 67.3% of traditional

⁵⁹ SUPREME COURT LEGAL SERVS. COMM., POLICY PAPER ON INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRATION OF ADR MECHANISMS 69-77 (2023).

⁶⁰ LAW COMM'N OF INDIA, 238TH REPORT ON AMENDMENT OF SECTION 89 OF THE CODE OF CIVIL PROCEDURE 28-35 (2011).

⁶¹ MAHARASHTRA STATE JUDICIAL ACAD., COMPARATIVE OUTCOME ANALYSIS: TRAINED VS. UNTRAINED LOK ADALAT FACILITATORS 37-44 (2022).

settlement rates despite technological challenges. The Digital India initiative should prioritize Lok Adalat technology infrastructure. The National Informatics Centre developed promising software requiring wider implementation. The Supreme Court e-Committee specifically recommended technological augmentation. Their vision document outlined comprehensive digital integration pathways for Lok Adalats.⁶²

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms require substantial strengthening. Current assessment relies primarily on quantitative measures like disposal numbers. Qualitative metrics should include settlement sustainability and participant satisfaction. Independent academic partnerships could enhance evaluation rigor. The Bangalore Mediation Centre's impact study methodology provides adaptable frameworks. Regular assessment reports should inform iterative improvements. The Chief Justices' Conference 2022 emphasized evidence-based policy refinements. Justice Ramana highlighted that "what gets measured improves" regarding ADR development.⁶³

Strategic integration of Lok Adalats with other ADR mechanisms represents a vital recommendation. Current systems operate in relatively isolated channels with limited cross-referral. A good ADR ecosystem should allow the movement between mechanisms. Cases not fit for Lok Adalats might move to mediation or arbitration. By matching the cases appropriately, this integration would ensure that the most opportunities for resolution are realised. Such systematic integration opportunities are presented by the Mediation Bill, 2021. Parliament should consider including explicit Lok Adalat co-ordination provisions during its deliberations. The integrated model is not merely an operational model, it requires alignment of both, infrastructural and procedural. Justice Chandrachud has advocated such integration in his 2023 Law Day speech. He imagined a "seamless dispute resolution continuum instead of isolated alternatives."⁶⁴

VI. CONCLUSION

Lok Adalats have proved immensely beneficial in tackling India's judicial backlog crisis. Their quantitative impact shows solid case resolution statistics across most dispute categories. The Lok Adalat mechanism helped resolve more than 31.45 million cases between 2016 and 2023. Incredibly, this milestone amounts to around 7.8% of total cases in subordinate courts in that timeframe. National Lok Adalats demonstrate remarkable efficiency through focused events of

⁶² SUPREME COURT E-COMMITTEE, PHASE III VISION DOCUMENT FOR E-COURTS PROJECT 103-110 (2021).

⁶³ Chief Justice N.V. Ramana, Address at 39th Chief Justices' Conference, New Delhi (Apr. 23, 2022).

⁶⁴ Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, Law Day Address, Supreme Court of India (Nov. 26, 2023).

resolution. Even in September 2022, a National Lok Adalat settled 1.16 million cases within a day. This expedited dispute resolution directly impacts pendency statistics across the country. This differential in disposal rate of Lok Adalats and the courts of law seems almost striking when viewed comparatively. These quantitative parameters highlight the Lok Adalats' substantial impact on backlog reduction initiatives.⁶⁵

The basis of the constitutional legitimacy of Lok Adalats lies in provisions ensuring access to justice. The constitutional foundation for these institutions is anchored in Articles 14, 21 and 39A. The supreme judiciary has also consistently upheld this constitutional tethering in landmark verdicts. This relationship was aptly phrased by Justice Bhagwati in *Hussainara Khatoon v. State of Bihar*. He stressed that procedural justice demands forums apart from the formal courts. Statutory provisions implementing these constitutional mandates exist under the Legal Services Authorities Act. The legislation sets up a complete infrastructure for administration of Lok Adalat all over the country. It creates top-tier authorities at national, state, and district levels. It also notifies the jurisdictional limits and procedural considerations for various types of Lok Adalat.⁶⁶

Several implementation challenges persist despite Lok Adalats' overall success. The voluntary nature of proceedings occasionally limits settlement potential with uncooperative parties. Power imbalances between disputants sometimes influence settlement terms through subtle coercion. Inadequate training for panel members affects settlement quality in some jurisdictions. Geographical disparities play a role in uneven rollout across the states. Utilization is much lower there than in the far-west states. Such variations indicate structural issues rather than simply differences in legislative architectures. Some districts face optimal functioning constraints because of institutional capacity limitations. Inequity in resource allocation especially impacts rural localities that lack proper infrastructure. Such challenges demand prudent interventions through policy reforms.⁶⁷

It facilitates useful insights for improving upon Lok Adalat with international comparative perspectives. Conciliator Training and Specialization Lessons from the Japanese Chotei System Mandatory Pre-Litigation Referral Requirements: Insights From the Philippines and Barangay Mechanisms Singapore has sophisticated case screening protocols in place to match the forum with the nature of the dispute. These international practices may guide systemic

⁶⁵ NAT'L LEGAL SERVS. AUTH., ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023 37-42 (2023).

⁶⁶ *Hussainara Khatoon v. State of Bihar*, (1979) 1 SCC 81.

⁶⁷ DEPT. OF JUSTICE, MINISTRY OF LAW & JUSTICE, STATE-WISE ANALYSIS OF LOK ADALAT PERFORMANCE (2018-2023) 22-29 (2023).

reforms in India's Lok Adalat framework. When we think of integrating institutions, the multi-door courthouse model is one that could be of particular interest. This would enable smooth transitions between different resolution tools. There are clearly inefficiencies in the current fragmented system that greater coordination between ADR options could help to address. Contextualisation of global best practices calls for infusing Indian realities.⁶⁸

Lok Adalats are an indigenous contribution of India to the international jurisprudence on ADR. They are able to incorporate contemporary legal structures to traditional approaches to dispute resolution. Such hybrid quality adds to their cultural authority amongst Indian diasporas. Using procedural flexibility, adaption of regional contexts will be possible everywhere. A settlement-driven approach matches cultural preferences to restore harmony. This cultural resonance tends to instill the public acceptance and participation. Justice Raveendran aptly referred to Lok Adalats as "bridging ancient wisdom with modern necessity". They are a logical evolution or adaptation — of institutional innovation — within the Indian legal landscape.⁶⁹

With necessary reforms, the future prospects of Lok Adalats are bright. Their proven efficiency could provide a route to address India's chronic judicial backlog. The integration of technology is invaluable; it opens up incredible potential for wider reach and dynamic influence. The increasing focus on qualitative aspects tells of matured institutional growth. The significance of India's Lok Adalat model is further substantiated by its international acceptance. India's experience has inspired similar mechanisms in a number of other neighbouring countries. This global outreach indicates Lok Adalats' role beyond domestic delivery of justice. As such, with further refinement they offer an approach to the management of judicial workload that is sustainable.

⁶⁸ SUPREME COURT OF SINGAPORE, APPROPRIATE DISPUTE RESOLUTION: SCREENING AND DIFFERENTIATION PROTOCOLS 56-63 (2021).

⁶⁹ *Afcons Infrastructure v. Cherian Varkey Construction*, (2010) 8 SCC 24.

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