

# Lokadalat: An Overview

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## **Abstract**

*Any discussion on criminal justice system in India will remain incomplete without a reference to the institution of Lok Adalat. The phraseology 'Lok Adalat' comprises two words, namely, 'Lok' and 'Adalat' the former expressing the concept of public opinion while the latter denoting the accurate and thorough deliberation aspect of decision making. Both these aspects have been blended judiciously in the institution of Lok Adalat as envisaged by Sections 19(1) and 20(4) of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. Judicial officers are integral part forming the composition of Lok Adalat and the principles of justice, equity and fair play are the guiding factors for decision based on compromises to be arrived at before such Adalats.*

*The credit of originating this system for speedy justice to common man goes to Mr. Justice P. N. Bhagwati, the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India who started Lok Adalats in the State of Gujarat during early seventies. This was followed by the States of Maharashtra, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Union Territory of Delhi, etc. which introduced Lok Adalats for urban and rural areas.*

The Lok Adalat is mainly concerned with two-fold functions. Firstly, it provides people a quick, easy, accessible, non-technical sympathetic and homely forum for resolution of their disputes and, secondly, it tackles the menace of what is known as 'docket explosion' i.e., piling number of pending cases which become unmanageable for the regular courts to handle effectively. Lok Adalat' is a system of conciliation or negotiation. It is also known as 'people's court'. Lok Adalat is a forum where the cases (or disputes) which are pending in a court or which are at the pre-litigation stage are compromised or settled in an amicable manner. The Supreme Court has explained the meaning of the institution of Lok Adalat in the following way:

The 'Lok Adalat' is an old form of adjudicating system that prevailed in ancient India and its validity has not been taken away even in modern days too. This system is based on Gandhian principles. As the Indian courts are overburdened with the backlog of cases involving lengthy, expensive and tedious procedures. The court takes years together to