



## Lok Adalats: A Comprehensive Analysis (2016-2023)

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### Abstract

The article provides a comprehensive and detailed examination of the history, scope, need, and significance of the Lok Adalat system in India. It delves into the authority bestowed upon Lok Adalats, their case handling process, and presents outcomes backed by data collected through conducted surveys. The researcher has thoughtfully included suggestions to enhance the effectiveness and fruitfulness of the Lok Adalat procedure, aiming to maximize the number of beneficiaries. This well-rounded exploration ensures a thorough understanding of the Lok Adalat system and its potential for improvement.

The implementation of Lok Adalats marks an important milestone in the nation's legal system, providing a successful alternative for victims to amicably resolve conflicts and reduce the burden on the judiciary. This initiative is consistent with the larger framework of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) systems. Historically, disputes were resolved at the village level by "panchayats," which used arbitration as a method of resolution. This method has proven to be a highly effective substitute for traditional court proceedings. The Lok Adalat ideology formalises the concept of resolving disputes through arbitration, negotiation, or mediation, referred to as a "Nyaya-Panchayat decision," which involves those who are directly or indirectly impacted by the resolution process. The researcher has adopted Doctrinal and non-doctrinal methods to achieve the objective of the study.

**Keywords:** Lok Adalat, People's Court, Legal Service Authority, NALSA, SLISA, DLSA, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) etc.

### Introduction

The Lok Adalat plays a pivotal role within the realm of alternative dispute redressal mechanisms facilitated through collaborative efforts by institutions such as NALSA and other Legal Services Institutions at State, District and Taluka levels. It serves as a forum for the amicable resolution of disputes, whether currently within the judicial system or at a pre-litigation stage.

**History of Lok Adalat:** Lok Adalat (the people's court) can trace its roots back to the ancient Indian jurisprudential system, where venerable village elders, renowned for their integrity, played a crucial role in resolving disputes and conflicts through adjudication or settlements. This historical pattern of dispute redressal by representative bodies within the village community has left a discernible mark throughout medieval and modern history, with abundant literature available on this subject. The reverence and esteem commanded by such bodies ensured widespread social acceptance of the verdicts they rendered.

**Statutory Status:** The Lok Adalat has attained statutory status under the Legal Services Authorities Act of 1987, which provides a structured framework for the functioning of Lok Adalats. Chapter VI of the Legal Services Authorities Act formally recognizes the ancient concept of decentralized dispute resolution. It delineates the constitution of Lok

Adalats and Permanent Lok Adalats, presided over by individuals drawn from diverse fields. The mechanism employed by Lok Adalats is characterized by its simplicity, cost-effectiveness, and the assurance of expeditious justice.

**Status of Awards Issued by Lok Adalat:** As per the provisions provided in the Legal Services Authorities Act of 1987, decisions or awards issued by Lok Adalats are deemed akin to decrees issued by civil courts. This imparts an authoritative finality to the adjudications, making them binding on all parties involved. It is essential to note that, under the Legal Services Authorities Act of 1987, there is no provision for an appeal against such an award, but they are free to initiate litigation by approaching the court of appropriate jurisdiction by filing a case following the required procedure, in exercise of their right to litigate.

**Court Fee:** There is an exemption from the payment of court fee when the matter is filed in the Lok Adalat. Furthermore, if a matter referred to the Lok Adalat is currently under the purview of a court of law and is and subsequently resolved, the court fee originally paid for the complaint or petition is refunded to the concerned parties.

**Members of Lok Adalat:** The individuals responsible for adjudicating cases in Lok Adalats are referred to as Members of the Lok Adalats. Their role is confined to the statutory conciliators; notably, they do not possess a judicial function.

Their primary responsibility lies in persuading the involved parties to arrive at a mutually agreeable settlement outside the court within the Lok Adalat. Importantly, these members are prohibited from applying pressure or coercion to induce parties to compromise or settle cases, either directly or indirectly.

It is imperative to note that the Lok Adalat refrains from independently deciding matters brought before it; instead, resolutions are reached based on the compromise or settlement agreed upon by the involved parties. The members of the Lok Adalat are tasked with assisting the parties in an unbiased and impartial manner, fostering an environment favorable to reaching an amicable settlement for their dispute.

### Kinds of Cases Referred to Lok Adalat

Cases referred to Lok Adalats typically encompass a broad spectrum of civil and criminal disputes. Cases can be referred to Lok Adalat at any stages like

- i). Any case pending before any court.
- ii). Any dispute which has not been brought before any court and is likely to be filed before the court.

**Civil Cases:** Civil cases may range from family matters such as matrimonial issues, child custody, and maintenance disputes to property-related conflicts, including partition suits and landlord-tenant disputes. Also, personal injury cases, motor accident claims, and cases involving monetary compensation are commonly addressed in Lok Adalats. Moreover, Lok Adalats are well-suited for resolving disputes related to negotiable instruments, banking, and finance. In the realm of public utilities, matters concerning electricity and water bills often find resolution through this alternative dispute resolution mechanism.

**Criminal Cases:** Criminal cases, particularly those involving compoundable offenses, can also be referred to Lok Adalats for amicable settlement. These may include offenses where the victim and the accused mutually agree to reach a compromise. Provided that any matter relating to an offence not compoundable under the law shall not be settled in Lok Adalat.

In essence, Lok Adalats serve as a versatile platform for resolving a diverse array of disputes, promoting expeditious and consensual resolutions across various legal domains. The State Legal Services Authority or District Legal Services Authority as the case may be on receipt of an application from any one of the parties at a pre-litigation stage may refer such matter to the Lok Adalat for amicable settlement of the dispute for which notice would then be issued to the other party.

### Effectiveness of Lok Adalats

The study sought to assess the efficacy of Lok Adalats at both the national and state levels, specifically in Himachal Pradesh. Data for the analysis was sourced from the National Legal Services Authority, covering the period from 2016 to September 2023 to provide a comprehensive overview of the performance and impact of Lok Adalats.

### National Lok Adalats

The data available on the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) website pertaining to National Lok Adalats reveals positive trends. However, for the year 2016, the available information lacks detail, providing only the total number of cases disposed off at both the national and state levels without specifying how many cases were actually taken up before the

Lok Adalat benches. It is noteworthy that until the year 2018, a total of five National Lok Adalats were held in a calendar year. However, a shift occurred in 2019, with National Lok Adalats being conducted on a quarterly basis thereafter. The detailed data regarding cases taken up and disposed of began to be recorded from the middle of 2018. To gain a comprehensive understanding of this necessary data, it is imperative to conduct a detailed examination for more insightful appreciation of the data.

### 1. Year 2016

**Table 1:** Disposal of cases at National Level

| Year | Cases Disposed Off |
|------|--------------------|
| 2016 | 51,46,084          |

Source: <https://nalsa.gov.in/>

**Table 2:** Disposal of cases at State of Himachal Pradesh

| Year | Cases Disposed Off |
|------|--------------------|
| 2016 | 10,544             |

Source: <https://nalsa.gov.in/>

### Data Analysis

According to this data, over 51 lakh cases were disposed off nationwide during the 2016 National Lok Adalats. 10,544 cases were resolved in Himachal Pradesh alone, which is a commendable figure.

### 2. Year 2017

Five National Lok Adalats were held across the country in 2017." The following information is available on the NALSA website:

**Table 3:** Disposal off cases at National Level

| Sr.   | Date of National Lok Adalat | Pre-litigation Disposal | Pending-Cases Disposal | Total Disposal | Total settlement Amount |
|-------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 1     | 11.02.2017                  | 302238                  | 651074                 | 953312         | 29400243450             |
| 2     | 08.04.2017                  | 532487                  | 413043                 | 945530         | 19007283024             |
| 3     | 08.07.2017                  | 468366                  | 550000                 | 1018366        | 30095856645             |
| 4     | 09.09.2017                  | 515296                  | 602914                 | 1118210        | 33307037733             |
| 5     | 09.12.2017                  | 659141                  | 711308                 | 1370449        | 37778486324             |
| Total |                             | 2477528                 | 2928339                | 5405867        | 149588907176            |

Source: <https://nalsa.gov.in/>

**Table 4:** Disposal off cases at State Level

| Sr.   | Date of National Lok Adalat | Pre-litigation Disposal | Pending-Cases Disposal | Total Disposal | Total settlement Amount |
|-------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 1     | 11.02.2017                  | 283                     | 9687                   | 9970           | 72140018                |
| 2     | 08.04.2017                  | 85                      | 1626                   | 1711           | 64065084                |
| 3     | 08.07.2017                  | 673                     | 3664                   | 4337           | 287808938               |
| 4     | 09.09.2017                  | 473                     | 2952                   | 3425           | 128740994               |
| 5     | 09.12.2017                  | 899                     | 3254                   | 4153           | 166373277               |
| Total |                             | 2413                    | 21183                  | 23596          | 719128311               |

Source: <https://nalsa.gov.in/>

### Data Analysis

Analyzing the available data reveals that a significant number of cases, totaling 54,05,867, were effectively disposed off during the five National Lok Adalats held nationwide.

Concurrently, at the State level, 23,596 cases were resolved. This data emphasizes a commendable achievement in terms of the caseload addressed before the benches of the National Lok Adalat, substantiating the efficacy of this alternative dispute resolution mechanism.

### 3. Year 2018

In 2018, a total of 5 National Lok Adalats were held across the country. The following information is available on the NALSA website:

**Table 5:** Disposal off cases at National Level

| Sr.   | Date of National Lok Adalat | Pre-litigation Disposal | Pending-Cases Disposal | Total Disposal | Total settlement Amount |
|-------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 1     | 10.02.2018                  | 682501                  | 580973                 | 1263474        | 26067242586             |
| 2     | 22.04.2018                  | 737469                  | 525774                 | 1263243        | 30349029804             |
| 3     | 14.07.2018                  | 605603                  | 498962                 | 1104565        | 30864699444             |
| 4     | 08.09.2018                  | 613261                  | 441550                 | 1054811        | 26174276634             |
| 5     | 08.12.2018                  | 632705                  | 560893                 | 1193598        | 40020841561             |
| Total |                             | 3271539                 | 2608152                | 5879691        | 149588907176            |

Source: <https://nalsa.gov.in/>

**Table 6:** Disposal off cases at State Level

| Sr.   | Date of National Lok Adalat | Pre-litigation Disposal | Pending-Cases Disposal | Total Disposal | Total settlement Amount |
|-------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 1     | 10.03.2018                  | 423                     | 2698                   | 3121           | 124229033               |
| 2     | 22.04.2018                  | 484                     | 3936                   | 4420           | 340638809               |
| 3     | 14.07.2018                  | 1245                    | 3238                   | 4483           | 192145487               |
| 4     | 08.09.2018                  | 1920                    | 3447                   | 5367           | 459414448               |
| 5     | 08.12.2018                  | 998                     | 2707                   | 3705           | 196013244               |
| Total |                             | 5070                    | 16026                  | 21096          | 1312441021              |

Source: <https://nalsa.gov.in/>

### Data Analysis

In the year 2018, a total of five National Lok Adalats were conducted nationwide, resulting in the disposal of 58,79,691 cases at the National level and 21,096 cases at the State level. These figures accentuate the substantial impact and efficacy of the National Lok Adalats in resolving significant number of cases both nationally and at the state level.

### 4. Year 2019

In the year 2019, a total of four National Lok Adalats were conducted nationwide. The details available on the NALSA website are as follows

**Table 7:** Disposal off cases at National Level

| Sr.   | Date of National Lok Adalat | Pre-litigation |             | Post-litigation |             | Total    |             |
|-------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
|       |                             | Taken-up       | Disposed of | Taken-up        | Disposed of | Taken-up | Disposed of |
| 1     | 09.03.2019                  | 3397025        | 705425      | 1696338         | 586970      | 5093363  | 1292395     |
| 2     | 13.07.2019                  | 3445956        | 661960      | 1998797         | 751834      | 5444753  | 1413794     |
| 3     | 14.09.2019                  | 2945400        | 586175      | 2186146         | 588469      | 5131546  | 1174644     |
| 4     | 14.12.2019                  | 3725934        | 722923      | 1929391         | 689517      | 5655325  | 1412440     |
| Total |                             | 13514315       | 2676483     | 7810672         | 2616790     | 21324987 | 5293273     |

Source: <https://nalsa.gov.in/>

**Table 8:** Disposal off cases at State Level

| Sr.   | Date of National Lok Adalat | Pre-litigation |             | Post-litigation |             | Total    |             |
|-------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
|       |                             | Taken-up       | Disposed of | Taken-up        | Disposed of | Taken-up | Disposed of |
| 1     | 09.03.2019                  | 4133           | 1020        | 5655            | 3000        | 9788     | 4020        |
| 2     | 13.07.2019                  | 9317           | 3313        | 8481            | 4382        | 17798    | 7695        |
| 3     | 14.09.2019                  | 6609           | 2651        | 6663            | 3291        | 13272    | 5942        |
| 4     | 14.12.2019                  | 8417           | 3711        | 8048            | 4064        | 16465    | 7775        |
| Total |                             | 28476          | 10695       | 28847           | 14737       | 57323    | 25432       |

Source: <https://nalsa.gov.in/>

### Data Analysis

According to data available on the NALSA website, in the year 2019, a total of 2,13,24,987 cases were taken up in four National Lok Adalats, with 52,93,273 cases being disposed off at the national level. This represents a disposal rate of 24.82%.

In the State of Himachal Pradesh, 57,323 cases were taken up in the four National Lok Adalats, and an impressive 44.36% of these cases, totaling 25,432, were successfully resolved. This noteworthy rate of case disposal before the National and State Lok Adalat indicates a strong public trust in this alternative dispute resolution mechanism.

### 5. Year 2020

In the year 2020, Two National Lok Adalats were held nationwide and the information available on the NALSA website is as under:-

**Table 9:** Disposal off cases at National Level

| Sr.   | Date of National Lok Adalat | Pre-litigation |             | Post-litigation |             | Total    |             |
|-------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
|       |                             | Taken-up       | Disposed of | Taken-up        | Disposed of | Taken-up | Disposed of |
| 1     | 08.02.2020                  | 3430080        | 674508      | 3424909         | 525067      | 6854989  | 1199575     |
| 2     | 12.12.2020                  | 2605926        | 590427      | 1690259         | 758366      | 4296185  | 1348793     |
| Total |                             | 6036006        | 1264935     | 5115168         | 1283433     | 11151174 | 2548368     |

Source: <https://nalsa.gov.in/>

**Table 10:** Disposal off cases at State Level

| Sr. | Date of National Lok Adalat | Pre-litigation |             | Post-litigation |             | Total    |             |
|-----|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
|     |                             | Taken-up       | Disposed of | Taken-up        | Disposed of | Taken-up | Disposed of |
| 1   | 14.03.2020                  | 6935           | 3023        | 5514            | 2948        | 12449    | 5971        |

Source: <https://nalsa.gov.in/>

### Data Analysis

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, physical activities were significantly limited, prompting courts to operate in virtual mode. Only two National Lok Adalats were held, addressing 1,11,51,174 cases, of which 25,48,368 (22.85%) were successfully resolved. A single National Lok Adalat was held in the state of Himachal Pradesh, resulting in the disposition of 47.96% of cases, totaling 5,971 out of 12,449. These figures highlight Lok Adalats' remarkable efficiency in resolving a large number of cases in a timely manner.

### 6. Year 2021

A total of four National Lok Adalats were held across the country in 2021. The following information is available on the NALSA website:

**Table 11:** Disposal off cases at National Level

| Sr.   | Date of National Lok Adalat | Pre-litigation |             | Post-litigation |             | Total    |             |
|-------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
|       |                             | Taken-up       | Disposed of | Taken-up        | Disposed of | Taken-up | Disposed of |
| 1     | 10.04.2021                  | 238249         | 65407       | 737235          | 419082      | 975484   | 484489      |
| 2     | 10.07.2021                  | 3752168        | 1127703     | 3050525         | 1578849     | 6802693  | 2706552     |
| 3     | 11.09.2021                  | 7281408        | 2472792     | 3446818         | 1638806     | 10728226 | 4111598     |
| 4     | 11.12.2021                  | 10032196       | 3540392     | 4127078         | 1945006     | 14159274 | 5485398     |
| Total |                             | 21304021       | 7206294     | 11361656        | 5581743     | 32665677 | 12788037    |

Source: <https://nalsa.gov.in/>

**Table 12:** Disposal off cases at State Level

| Sr.   | Date of National Lok Adalat | Pre-litigation |             | Post-litigation |             | Total    |             |
|-------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
|       |                             | Taken-up       | Disposed of | Taken-up        | Disposed of | Taken-up | Disposed of |
| 1     | 10.04.2021                  | 6085           | 2090        | 6671            | 3976        | 12756    | 6066        |
| 2     | 10.07.2021                  | 11844          | 4668        | 6737            | 2852        | 18581    | 7520        |
| 3     | 11.09.2021                  | 16628          | 6175        | 14314           | 5002        | 30942    | 11177       |
| 4     | 11.12.2021                  | 15598          | 5298        | 10551           | 5495        | 26149    | 10793       |
| Total |                             | 50155          | 18231       | 38273           | 17325       | 88428    | 35556       |

Source: <https://nalsa.gov.in/>

### Data Analysis

In the year 2021, a notable 39.14% of cases, totaling 1,27,88,037, were successfully disposed off out of a total of 3,26,65,677 cases taken up in the four National Lok Adalats held across the country. At the state level, 88,428 cases were taken up in the four National Lok Adalats, with an impressive 40.20%, or 35,556, being resolved. These statistics demonstrate Lok Adalats' continued effectiveness in addressing a large caseload both nationally and at the state level.

### 7. Year 2022

A total of four National Lok Adalats were held across the country in 2022. The following information is available on the NALSA website:

**Table 13:** Disposal off cases at National Level

| Sr.   | Date of National Lok Adalat | Pre-litigation |             | Post-litigation |             | Total    |             |
|-------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
|       |                             | Taken-up       | Disposed of | Taken-up        | Disposed of | Taken-up | Disposed of |
| 1     | 12.03.2022                  | 16862532       | 5359481     | 4962282         | 2435878     | 21824814 | 7795359     |
| 2     | 14.05.2022                  | 14428609       | 6707435     | 5553794         | 2870774     | 19982403 | 9578209     |
| 3     | 13.08.2022                  | 20410902       | 8246801     | 5215548         | 2604752     | 25626450 | 10851553    |
| 4     | 12.11.2022                  | 23953773       | 10701498    | 6232491         | 2999391     | 30186264 | 13700889    |
| Total |                             | 75655816       | 31015215    | 21964115        | 10910795    | 97619931 | 41926010    |

Source: <https://nalsa.gov.in/>

**Table 14:** Disposal off cases at State Level

| Sr.   | Date of National Lok Adalat | Pre-litigation |             | Post-litigation |             | Total    |             |
|-------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
|       |                             | Taken-up       | Disposed of | Taken-up        | Disposed of | Taken-up | Disposed of |
| 1     | 12.03.2022                  | 13250          | 3816        | 36658           | 13719       | 49908    | 17535       |
| 2     | 14.05.2022                  | 12447          | 2240        | 31311           | 17192       | 43758    | 19432       |
| 3     | 13.08.2022                  | 16023          | 5024        | 32332           | 18984       | 48355    | 24008       |
| 4     | 27.11.2022                  | 21520          | 12930       | 92140           | 37245       | 113660   | 50175       |
| Total |                             | 63240          | 24010       | 192441          | 87140       | 255681   | 111150      |

Source: <https://nalsa.gov.in/>

### Data Analysis

In the year 2022, a significant 42.94% of cases, totaling 4,19,26,010, were successfully disposed off at the national level, out of a total of 9,76,19,931 cases taken up in the four National Lok Adalats. Concurrently, 2,55,681 cases were addressed in the same National Lok Adalats at the state level, with an impressive 43.47% of these cases, totaling 1,11,150, being disposed off. These statistics demonstrate Lok Adalats' continued effectiveness in efficiently tackling a large caseload both nationally and at the state level.

### 8. Year 2023

As of now, three National Lok Adalats have been held across the country in the year 2023. The following information is available on the NALSA website:

**Table 15:** Disposal off cases at National Level

| Sr.   | Date of National Lok Adalat | Pre-litigation |             | Post-litigation |             | Total     |             |
|-------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
|       |                             | Taken-up       | Disposed of | Taken-up        | Disposed of | Taken-up  | Disposed of |
| 1     | 11.02.2023                  | 32713845       | 17604677    | 5990139         | 3057454     | 38703984  | 20662131    |
| 2     | 13.05.2023                  | 24447578       | 15632501    | 5981543         | 3381576     | 30429121  | 19014077    |
| 3     | 09.09.2023                  | 24190061       | 16251374    | 6726729         | 4244195     | 30916790  | 20495569    |
| Total |                             | 81351484       | 49488552    | 18698411        | 10683225    | 100049895 | 60171777    |

Source: <https://nalsa.gov.in/>

**Table 16:** Disposal off cases at State Level

| Sr.   | Date of National Lok Adalat | Pre-litigation |             | Post-litigation |             | Total    |             |
|-------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
|       |                             | Taken-up       | Disposed of | Taken-up        | Disposed of | Taken-up | Disposed of |
| 1     | 11.03.2023                  | 14099          | 6582        | 71517           | 31692       | 85616    | 38274       |
| 2     | 13.05.2023                  | 12951          | 3152        | 72483           | 26282       | 85434    | 29434       |
| 3     | 09.09.2023                  | 14759          | 4218        | 87066           | 41672       | 101825   | 45890       |
| Total |                             | 41809          | 13952       | 231066          | 99646       | 272875   | 113598      |

Source: <https://nalsa.gov.in/>

### Data Analysis

In the year 2023, a substantial caseload of 10,00,49,895 cases were addressed at the national level across the first three National Lok Adalats, with an impressive 60.14% of these cases, totaling 6,01,71,777, being successfully disposed off. Simultaneously, 2,72,875 cases were taken up at the state level during the same period, with 41.63% of these cases, totaling 1,13,598, being disposed off. These statistics highlight Lok Adalats' ongoing effectiveness in resolving a significant number of cases both nationally and at the state level.

### Conclusion

The data analysis covering from 2016 to 2023 illustrates a consistent and commendable track record of Lok Adalats in effectively addressing a significant caseload both at the national and state levels. The disposal rates, ranging from 22.85% to an impressive 60.14%, highlights the efficiency and efficacy of Lok Adalats as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism. Despite challenges, including the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Lok Adalats have continued to play a vital role in providing expeditious justice. During the pandemic, the shift to virtual platforms demonstrated adaptability, ensuring the continuation of dispute resolution activities.

The data reveals a positive trend, indicating a high level of public trust in Lok Adalats. The consistent disposal rates, even during challenging circumstances, highlight the resilience and relevance of Lok Adalats in contributing to the larger goal of accessible and timely justice. It is evident that Lok Adalats stand as a fundamental pillar in the justice delivery system, providing a forum for amicable resolutions and fostering public confidence in alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

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