PREFACE

Humanity has been clamouring for justice since the time immemorial. Need for justice has been felt from the very beginning of human civilization to resolve the conflicts arising due to differences in the human nature. In order to secure co-operation in any community living and to resolve the conflicts peacefully, formal or informal institutions were created. Gradually, with the emergence of modern states, these institutions in the form of judicial dept. has come to occupy the pride of place.

In a modern state, judiciary acts as the watch dog of rights and liberties of the citizen. Unless justice is ensured, the freedom of individual becomes meaningless. There is great truth in Bryce's wise remark: "If the lamp of justice goes out in darkness, how great is that darkness".

Like the other modern nations, we Indians also have a well-organised judicial system with the Supreme Court, standing at the apex. Below it stand the High Courts of different states and under each high court, there is a hierarchy of "Subordinate Courts". Indian Supreme Court, which was established as a federal court, under the Govt. of India, 1935, was elevated to the position of the
'Final Court of Appeal' only after the independence and under the new constitution. Though the Supreme Court and other courts have well performed their task of protecting the individual rights and liberties and have left no stone unturned to provide them justice, yet certain malaise within the system, such as inordinate delay in delivering justice due to long and arduous process, the growing arrears and accumulated workload, exorbitant cost of litigation and corruption in lower courts, often keep justice out of reach of poor and ignorant masses. So in order to restore the credibility and efficacy of the judiciary and to provide free and competent legal services to the people, "COMMITTEE FOR IMPLEMENTING LEGAL AID SCHEMES" (CILAS) was appointed, by a Govt. resolution dated 20th Sept. 1980, which has taken up programmes such as promoting legal literacy, organising legal camps in rural areas, training paralegal and bare-foot lawyers in the basic elements of social legislation to enable them to identify the legal problems of the poor and to provide them free legal aid, etc. To make these schemes more effective and to provide cheap and speedy justice to people, a new system of dispensation of justice was instituted in the form of 'LOK ADALATS' which got statutory recognition under the 'LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY ACT', 1987. It implies providing inexpensive and speedy 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, which generally undertakes all types cases, civil, revenue and compoundable criminal cases and cases pending in courts, tribunals etc.

For sometimes now, Lok Adalats are being constituted at various places in country for disposal of cases through arbitration and settlement between parties, expeditiously and at lesser costs. These Lok Adalats are at present, functioning as voluntary and conciliatory agency without any statutory backing for its decisions, to take justice to the door-steps of the poor and the needy masses to make justice quicker and less expensive.

Our purpose here is to asses how far these institutions have been successful in achieving their objective of administering quick and fair justice to the deprived. A special reference is to be given to the functioning of Lok Adalats in the state of Orissa.

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