



## **ACCESS TO JUSTICE: EVERYONE'S RIGHT!**

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The concept of legal aid can be witnessed in the 40th paragraph of the Magna Carta, which is stated as under;

*“To no one will we sell, to no one will we deny or delay right or justice.”*

Our constitution provides for free legal aid as a right for every individual who due to financial or any other reason cannot afford a lawyer. Our Constitution assures to each citizen not mere political justice, but more importantly social justice and economic justice. In fact, mere assurance of political justice is of no substance if the citizens are denied their social or economic rights. Similarly, mere social justice would be hollow if it is not accompanied by just distribution of economic resources geminated with equitable access to the opportunities.

When we talk of justice in the broader sense, we have to bear in mind the definition given in Justinian's Corpus Juris Civilis which states that “Justice is constant and perpetual will to render to everyone that to which he is entitled”. Similarly, Cicero described justice as “the disposition of the human mind to render everyone his due”. Thus, the rights guaranteed to persons are inherent in the very notion of justice. Given that justice is defined in terms of rights, access to justice, most simply put would include the ability of any person to approach the appropriate authority and effectively claim the enforcement of rights. Thus, access to justice, in more real terms, would include the sum total of all those rights and remedies

available to a person through which he can seek the enforcement of his or her rights.<sup>1</sup>

‘*Access to Justice*’ in its general term, means the individual’s access to court or a guarantee of legal representation. It has many fundamental elements such as identification and recognition of grievance, awareness and legal advice or assistance, accessibility to court or claim for relief, adjudication of grievance, enforcement of relief, of course this may be the ultimate goal of a litigant public.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of ‘*Access to Justice*’ has two significant components. *First* is a strong and effective legal system with rights, enumerated and supported by substantive legislations. The *second* is a useful and accessible judicial/ remedial system easily available to the litigant public. The Constitution of India is the living document of this Country and the basic law of this Nation. As disclosed in its preamble, it stands for securing justice to all the Citizens. In Article 39A<sup>3</sup>, the Constitution retains its aspiration to secure and promote access to justice, in following terms;

“*The State shall secure that the operations of the legal system promote justice, on the basis of equal opportunity, and shall, in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities*”.

Access to justice is recognized as a prominent and fundamental right, in several international documents. In India, the National Commission to Review the Working of Constitution (NCRWC), constituted in the 50<sup>th</sup> year of Independence, in its final report suggested for incorporation of this right as fundamental rights by incorporating Art.30 A, in the Constitution, in the following terms;

“**30 A. Access to Courts and Tribunals and Speedy justice.**- (1) Everyone has a right to have any dispute that can be resolved by the application of law decided in fair public hearing before an independent court, or where appropriate, another independent and impartial tribunal or forum.

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<sup>1</sup> Y. K. Sabharwal, ‘Access To Justice, Role Of Law And Legal Institutions In The Alleviation Of Poverty And Deprivation’, SUPREME COURT OF INDIA (14 March, 2015; 10:09 PM) [http://www.supremecourtindia.in/speeches/speeches\\_2006/cuttack.pdf](http://www.supremecourtindia.in/speeches/speeches_2006/cuttack.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

(2). The right to access to courts shall deemed to include the right to reasonably speedy and effective justice in all matters before the courts, tribunal or other for and state shall take all reasonable steps to achieve the said objectives.”<sup>4</sup>

The concept of access to justice, primarily, necessitates a potential system securing appropriate legal remedies within the Civil and Criminal justice fields. Judiciary, being an integral part and parcel of an effective judicial system, has a greater role in ensuring access to justice. As per V.R. Krishna Iyer, the prominent jurist of our Country and the former Judge of the Supreme Court of India, access to justice, which is fundamental in implementation of every human right, makes the judicial role pivotal to constitutional functionalism.<sup>5</sup>

There are other sets of rights guaranteed as per the express provisions in the Statutes. Right of representation in elected bodies, right to maintenance, right to minimum wages, right to social security, right to vote are some of such rights. In India, there are number of statutes dealing with these special kinds of rights, such as Representation of Peoples Act, Minimum Wages Act, Provisions for Maintenance under Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, Social security under Workmen’s Compensation Act, Industrial Disputes Act, Employee’s Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, Payment of Bonus Act, Payment of Gratuity Act, Employees State Insurance Act etc.<sup>6</sup>

### **Obstacles ?**

The conventional method of access to justice is the recourse to formal adjudication mechanisms as provided by the State, i.e. approaching the courts. However, with the Constitution of India coming into force, the fundamental policy choice of the nation changed. The people of India, through their representatives in Constituent Assembly, resolved to secure for all its citizens Justice- social, economic and political.<sup>7</sup> Apart from this solemn

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<sup>3</sup> Constitution of India, art. 39A.

<sup>4</sup> Constitution of India, art. 30A

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> F.M. Ibrahim Kalifulla, ‘Role of Courts in upholding Rule of Law’, HCRAJ (14 March, 2015; 10:15 PM), <http://hcrj.nic.in/joc2014/16.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Y. K. Sabharwal, *Supra* note 1.

affirmation in the preamble, Article 14 of the Constitution makes it incumbent on the State not to deny to any person equality before law or equal protection of law. Thus the State is under a duty to ensure that every person is given equal protection of laws and breach of this duty will be a violation of the mandate in Article 14. In addition, Article 256 casts a duty on the State governments to ensure compliance with every law made by the Parliament and every existing law. Thus under the Constitution, a strict duty is cast on the State to ensure that there is a compliance with every law. Violation of a private right is undoubtedly a breach of law and as such if such a breach occurs, the presumption is that the State has failed in its duty of ensuring compliance with every law and giving equal protection of laws to every person.<sup>8</sup>

However, the aforementioned constitutional scheme has not seen the light of the day in practical working. The colonial hang-over is still haunting our legal system inasmuch so that we are still following the adversarial model of litigation. Following this alien model has led to a lot of problems. Some of them are enumerated below:

### **1. Awareness**

The general lack of awareness of legal rights and remedies acts as a formidable barrier to accessing the formal adjudication machinery.<sup>9</sup>

### **2. Mystification**

The language of the law, invariably in very difficult and complicated English, makes it unintelligible even to the literate or educated person. And this is the language that courts and lawyers are comfortable with. Very little attempt has been made at vernacularising the language of the law and making it simpler and easily comprehensible to the person engaging with the FLS. This is the second major barrier.<sup>10</sup>

### **3. Delay**

Due to the adversarial model, the expediency of the litigatory process has been sacrificed. In an average, a civil case takes 20 years to settle. This problem of delay is due to the extended

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Iftikhar Hussian Bhat, 'Access To Justice: A Critical Analysis Of Alternate Dispute Resolution Mechanisms In India', International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (15 March, 2017; 11:20 PM), [http://www.ijhssi.org/papers/v2\(5\)/version-5/G254653.pdf](http://www.ijhssi.org/papers/v2(5)/version-5/G254653.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

role of advocates in the litigation process. Despite being officers of the Court, they do not have any accountability towards expedient disposal of cases. Similarly there is no accountability of the judges to dispose off cases as early as possible. With huge influx of cases on a daily basis and substantial amount of arrears, the problem of arrears is taking a gargantuan shape. In this regards, the remarks of eminent jurist, Nani A. Palkiwala can be referred "...legal redress is time consuming enough to make infinity, intelligible. A lawsuit once started in India is the nearest thing to eternal life ever seen on this earth.....<sup>[11]</sup> I am not aware of any country in the world where litigation goes on for as long a period as in India. Our cases drag over a length of time which makes eternity intelligible.<sup>11</sup> The law may or may not be an ass, but in India it is certainly a snail and our cases proceed at a pace which would be regarded as unduly slow in a community of snails. Justice has to be blind, but I see no reason why it should be also lame: here it just hobbles along, barely able to walk."

#### **4. Costs**

The cost of litigation in India is very high. This is also a repercussion of the adoption of adversarial model of litigation. Since the court cases drag on for years, the costs increases manifold. In a country like India, where a substantial proportion of population still lives below the poverty line, the adverse cost benefit of taking recourse to the courts is very low. In fact the entire adjudicatory mechanism being alien to the Indian society, there is a lack of faith on the judiciary. It aggravates due to the fact that justice seems to be illusory in India.<sup>12</sup>

#### **5. Geographical Location**

This is an aspect that has not merited the attention it deserves. We need to audit the physical accessibility of courts from the point of view of user friendliness. And this need not involve additional costs. For instance, we have not yet designed our courtrooms and buildings to account for the needs of differently-abled people.<sup>13</sup>

#### **6. Access to Constitutional Courts**

This is a matter of concern. In our constitutional framework, petitions for protection and enforcement of fundamental rights can be filed only in the High Courts and the Supreme

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<sup>11</sup> Iftikhar Hussian Bhat, *Supra* note 9.

<sup>12</sup> Y. K. Sabharwal, *Supra* note 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

Court. Thus, for instance, even petitions arising out of issues such as disappearances, custodial violence, encounter killings or instances where the police cannot be activated due to various reasons, have to be sent or filed to the High Court. Invariably, this involves travel to the High Court, engaging a lawyer there and a regular follow up. A lot of time and expense is involved in this process.<sup>14</sup>

The problem of access to justice is deep and pervasive in India and has affected the ability of the legal system and judicial process to respond to injustices. The crisis of delays that has engulfed the Indian judicial process calls for responses at multiple levels of decision-making. A range of reforms — legal, judicial and institutional — needs to be initiated for dealing with delays and ensuring access to justice.

One such important reform is to expand and establish more permanent benches of High Courts in different parts of the country. Historical happenstance has caused the establishment of principal benches of High Courts in different cities in the country. While most States have the principal bench of the High Court located in the capital city, there are a number of States where the principal seat of the High Court is located in another city. Regardless of whether the principal bench of the High Court is in the State capital or not, the imperative of access to justice demands that we move towards establishing adequate benches of High Courts as and when the need arises. The following issues need to be carefully examined while we consider the policy aspects of establishing additional benches of High Courts.<sup>15</sup>

#### **Substitution: Acting as effective tools...**

India has constituted statutory authorities to provide free legal services to the poor and marginalized sections of the society. The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) together with State Legal Services Authorities (SLSA) are mandated to provide free legal services to the weaker sections of the society including legal advice, legal counseling, legal aid for filing and/or arguing matters in the courts, court fees etc. The A2J Project works closely with the National and State Legal Services Authorities and the judicial academies with a view to develop the capacity of service delivery institutions for serving the people

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<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> C. RAJ KUMAR, 'Expanding Access to Justice', *The Hindu* (14 March, 2017; 10:25 PM), <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/expanding-access-to-justice/article5398212.ece>

better.<sup>16</sup>

- **Legal Aid**

India's legal and judicial system also provides legal aid services, including alternative dispute resolution for certain matters (known as *Lok Adalats*). Legal aid is a fundamental right in India and the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 (LSAA), provides for free legal aid to vulnerable groups. The statute institutionalized the system of legal aid delivery by setting up the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) in 1995. NALSA has identified some major constraints in carrying out its mandate to the poor and disadvantaged women and men at the national, state and local levels including weak planning, budgeting and implementation capacities.<sup>17</sup>

- **Legal Awareness**

In many instances, poor and marginalised women and men are unable to seek the protection of the law or take advantage of rights or public services they are entitled to simply because they are unaware that they exist. In cases where they may be aware of the existence of the laws or rights, they may not be aware of how to use the law in order to claim or enforce their rights or entitlements.<sup>18</sup>

There is a clear recognition by the Government of India of its primary duty in ensuring legal awareness. State legal services authorities and NGOs are involved in a variety of legal literacy activities. However, increased public legal education and information initiatives are urgently needed and essential to improve access to justice for marginalized groups. The media, particularly community radio and television, are extremely useful tools for public legal information and education campaigns in both rural and urban areas. Further, it is important that sufficient legal information is able to reach the poor in forms that they are able to understand, digest and utilise.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ashwini Kumar, 'Equitable Access to Justice: Legal AID and Legal Empowerment', UNDP (15 March, 2017; 12:06 AM), [http://www.in.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/In-the-News-2012/UNDP\\_India\\_in\\_the\\_news\\_1711201201.pdf](http://www.in.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/In-the-News-2012/UNDP_India_in_the_news_1711201201.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Increasing Access to Justice to Marginalized People, UNDP (15 March, 2017; 10:32 PM), [http://www.in.undp.org/content/india/en/home/operations/projects/democratic\\_governance/access\\_to\\_justice.html](http://www.in.undp.org/content/india/en/home/operations/projects/democratic_governance/access_to_justice.html)

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Supra* note 16.

- **State-Sponsored ADR Forums**

ADR forums like TGSs can provide relatively fast and inexpensive resolution of some disputes, frequently disposing of cases involving land disputes, petty criminal charges, and divorce in less than a year. In part, this is because parties can appear pro se, relying instead on judges who, free from common delay tactics, are incentivised to expeditiously move cases forward. The absence of lawyers also gives judges more opportunity to interact directly with litigants. The flexibility of ADR affords judges greater opportunity to work with the parties in a conciliatory manner to reach settlements that are agreeable to all involved.<sup>20</sup>

- **Specialized Courts**

Sometimes specialized court judges can arrive at quicker conclusions where they have become specialists in the particular area of law that their forum is designed to oversee. One hundred eighty generalist lawyers in Gujarat who had experiences or familiarity with specialized courts and ADR forums in their areas were asked what forums were best at protecting the rights of their clients. Twenty-three percent stated that the consumer forum was the best at protecting claimants' rights, followed by the labor courts at 15% and NGOs at 13%.<sup>21</sup>

- **Lok Adalats**

Most Indians cannot easily obtain justice through India's formal court system. Lok Adalats ("LAs") are informal courts of first impression interspersed throughout India, which provide alternative dispute resolution ("ADR") services designed to address this problem by bringing justice to the public. Lok Adalat means "people's court" in Hindi, one of the official languages of India. LAs provide the only point of access to the justice system of India for many citizens that operate in rural and remote regions. Additionally, LAs are one of India's principal means of providing ADR mechanisms to its citizens. LAs allow parties to overcome economic, organizational, and procedural barriers that would otherwise prevent them from accessing justice.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Jayanth K. Krishnan et al., 'Grappling at the Grassroots: Access to Justice in India's Lower Tier', (15 March, 2017; 10:36 PM), [http://harvardhrj.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/V27\\_Krishnan\\_et\\_al.pdf](http://harvardhrj.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/V27_Krishnan_et_al.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*



As a result, the LA system is currently established throughout India. many more millions of disputes. As a means for dispute resolution, this system has the potential to relieve the overburdened dockets of more formal courts. LAs also provide people with opportunities for justice that they might not otherwise have in the formal court system.<sup>23</sup>

### **Courts Jurisprudence**

In 1981 Justice P. N. Bhagwati in *S. P. Gupta v. Union of India*<sup>24</sup>, articulated the concept of PIL as follows;

*“Where a legal wrong or a legal injury is caused to a person or to a determinate class of persons by reason of violation of any constitutional or legal right or any burden is imposed in contravention of any constitutional or legal provision or without authority of law or any such legal wrong or legal injury or illegal burden is threatened and such person or determinate class of persons by reasons of poverty, helplessness or disability or socially or economically disadvantaged position unable to approach the court for relief, any member of public can maintain an application for an appropriate direction, order or writ in the High Court under Article 226 and in case any breach of fundamental rights of such persons or determinate class of persons, in this court under Article 32 seeking judicial redress for the legal wrong or legal injury caused to such person or determinate class of persons.”*

Another notable case is *Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Samity v. State of West Bengal*<sup>25</sup>. This case involved a petition based on the right to life of an agricultural labourer who suffered severe head injuries and was taken to seven different government hospitals, all of which refused him treatment on the grounds that there was no vacant bed. The Indian Supreme Court “carved out” the right to emergency medical care for accident victims as forming a core component of the right to health, which in turn was recognized as forming an integral part of the right to life, a right guaranteed under the Indian Constitution. Following this decision, the State was required to formulate a blue print for primary health care with

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<sup>23</sup> Tameem Zainulbhai, Justice for All: Improving the Lok Adalat System in India, FORDHAM INTERNATIONAL LAW JOURNAL (March 15, 2017; 12:07 PM) <http://fordhamilj.org/articles/justice-for-all-improving-the-lok-adalat-system-in-india/>

<sup>24</sup> AIR 1982 SC 149

<sup>25</sup> (1996) AIR SC 2426/ (1996) 4 SCC 37

particular reference to treatment of patients in an emergency.<sup>26</sup><sup>11</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

In *People's Union for Civil Liberties v. Union of India*<sup>27</sup>, in April 2001, despite of the tons of food stocks in the country's warehouses, there was a food scarcity in states affected by drought. The People's Union for Civil Liberties applied for relief from the shortage in the courts based on the right to food derived from the right to life, the latter a right guaranteed by the Constitution. The Court upheld this right by specifically stating that food must be provided to the aged, infirmed, disabled, destitute women, men and children and pregnant and lactating women. Several other orders were made by the court including: (a) ration shops must remain open and give grains to families below the poverty line; (b) the Government should publicize the right of the families below the poverty line to grain; (c) grain allocation for the Food for Work programme must be doubled; (d) all individuals without means of support (including older persons, widows, persons with disabilities) are to be granted a ration card; and (e) implementation of the mid-day meal scheme in schools.<sup>28</sup>

Seeing the potential of court decisions opens up more possibilities for work in this area, especially for the protection and enforcement of economic, social and cultural rights. However, court decisions should be used with caution as the judicial introduction of norms may also divert the community from a more open and democratic process of norm making through Constitutional or statutory amendments. Courts, however, can serve to clarify legal ambiguity and can prompt legislative bodies to review or enact adequate legislation. Interventions to increase access to justice should work with informal structures, as well as with the formal sector. Informal and tradition institutions should not be seen as a substitute or replacement of formal justice institutions but rather viewed as a complementary system to reinforce the provision of justice to the majority of citizens.

Court reform strategies traditionally focus on enhancing operational efficiency and developing human resource capacity. While these approaches are critical, if the court system is approached from an access to justice perspective, additional principles, which underpin the provision of access to justice by the court system will need to be addressed. These principles

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<sup>26</sup> *Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samity & Ors v State of West Bengal & Anor.*, 4 SCC 37 (1996)

<sup>27</sup> AIR[2003] SC 2363

<sup>28</sup> *Programming for Justice: Access for All A Practitioner's Guide to a Human Rights-Based Approach to Access to Justice*, UNDP (14 March, 2017; 10:41 PM), [http://www.unrol.org/files/justice\\_guides\\_programmingforjustice-accessforall.pdf](http://www.unrol.org/files/justice_guides_programmingforjustice-accessforall.pdf)

are accountability, accessibility and independence. It is important to recognize that all three principles need to guide any programming intervention aiming to enhance access to justice within the court system and enhance public confidence and trust in the justice system. The application of these principles also contributes to improving public perception of the justice system – the judicial system not only needs to deliver justice, but needs to be seen by the public as a just system.<sup>29</sup>

### **Future of Access of Justice: Technology.**

The concept of e-courts or e-judiciary is not new to India since talks about establishment of e-courts in India are in progress since 2003. Despite many talks, establishment of e-judiciary in India always remained a dream. As a result electronic delivery of justice in India is still struggling and facing many techno legal hurdles.

There is no doubt that e-courts can bring speedier and economic justice to Indian masses. Right to a speedy trial is contained in Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. It mandates a speedier and timely disposal of a case. Presently, India is facing a mammoth backlog of cases that can be reduced drastically by use of technology and e-courts. Technology can also help in achieving the objectives of National Litigation Policy of India.

The efforts for the establishment of e-courts in India are not sufficient and needs rejuvenation. This is happening because the legislature and executive are not versed with the litigation and the legal fraternity is never consulted while making techno-legal laws. India is also not experimenting well with concepts like online dispute resolution (ODR). In the absence of any interest for ODR in India this concept has still not been adopted by Indian government.<sup>30</sup>

India has been experimenting with technology for long. Even a basic level legal framework has been introduced in India in the form of Information Technology Act, 2000 though it requires immediate repeal or amendment. There are many shortcomings of the IT Act 2000 and one of them is non binding nature of e-governance obligations of Indian government. The National E-Governance Plan (NEGP) of India has also failed to meet its objectives and marks. As a result India has failed on the fronts of both e-government and e-governance.

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> 'E-Courts In India And E-Judiciary In India', (15 March, 2017, 10:46 PM), [www.electroniccourts.in/blog/](http://www.electroniccourts.in/blog/)

While India is still struggling to deal with basic level technology adoption, the BJP government has announced projects like Digital India and Internet of things (IoT) that rely prominently upon technology. These projects intend to extend the services to general public in the field like healthcare, education, judicial services etc.<sup>31</sup>

For too long it was felt that electronic delivery (e-delivery) of services in India is required. However, e-delivery of services in India remains missing till now. With the announcement of Digital India and Internet of Things (IoT) initiatives by Narendra Modi Government, things are definitely going to change. This is more so regarding fields like education, healthcare, Judiciary, etc.

As far as Judiciary is concerned, the concepts of online dispute resolution (ODR) and electronic courts (e-courts) must be essential part of the Digital India and Internet of Things initiatives. Both ODR and e-courts must also be part of the National Litigation Policy of India (NLPI) as well. In short, legal enablement of ICT systems in India is need of the hour.

Indian Government is considering amending the Arbitration law of India and also to bring suitable changes in the NLPI. The e-committee of the Supreme Court has rejected the government proposal to initiate audio-video recording of all court proceedings, suggested to begin with all 15,000 subordinate courts. This was intended to expedite trials and bring transparency and accountability in judiciary. The e-committee rejected the proposal saying this was not acceptable at present. It seems the Indian judiciary is still not ready for the concept of e-courts.<sup>32</sup>

This is a major setback to the e-courts project of India as the computerisation stage is already over and with that system and infrastructure, e-courts cannot be established in India. There is an urgent need to shift to the second stage of e-courts project that is not happening. The Digital India initiative is also stressing upon judiciary and education as areas of priority. This means that Digital India is contemplating establishment and using of e-courts to meet its objective. While Indian government has decided to launch a platform for e-books yet e-courts

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

project seems to have taken a big blow. How Indian government would establish e-judiciary/e-courts in India in these circumstances is yet to be seen.

The only solace can be found in the form of pro active steps taken and decision given by various High Courts and Supreme Court of India. In one such incidence, the Delhi High Court has ruled that marriage registration certificate can be issued by the Registrar on the basis of video conferencing of the concerned parties. This would help couples that are staying abroad and who cannot come to India for the sole purpose of in person hearing and attendance.

Justice Manmohan, allowing this procedure in favour of a newly-wed couple based in Canada, said that the rule mandating physical presence while applying for registration was “framed at a time when technology was nascent”. The court said the family members could take delivery of the marriage certificate once the couple confirms this through video-conferencing.

“The law has to adapt to changing times,” the court opined. It also said that developments that have changed the world and the way we view the world today were “unimaginable” and perhaps “beyond comprehension of the rule makers”. The court also observed that technology has enabled parties today to attest documents digitally and ensure digitally secure transmission through the internet.

The court directed the registering authority of the Hindu Marriage Act to accept the application for registering the marriage of couple through their power of attorney holders.<sup>33</sup>

### **The way forward...**

There are a number of efforts currently being taken across the country for promoting access to justice. New proposals for establishing additional benches of High Courts are under consideration. This should change and the focus should be trained on what matter most, namely, promoting access to justice, reducing costs and delays, and improving efficiency of the government agencies in dealing with appellate litigation. Only then can we hope to instil faith among the Indian citizenry in the ability of the judicial process to deliver justice. This is an existential imperative for our legal system.

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<sup>33</sup> *Id.*

The Supreme Court recently has set up a social justice bench to deliver speedy access to constitutional rights, particularly those relating to women and children. The bench will deal exclusively with social matters, including the right to food and medical assistance. The move is designed to ensure that these cases can move quickly through the apex court and, notably, to encourage deeper deliberation on the rights and responsibilities of the state. The move is designed to ensure that these cases can move quickly through the apex court and, notably, to encourage deeper deliberation on the rights and responsibilities of the state.<sup>34</sup>

Litigants hold hope that judges can safeguard their rights and interests better than anyone else. To begin with, given the respect that lower-tier judges have within their communities, judges should be incentivized to take the lead in fighting corruption. Training and education must be enhanced for current judges as well as for students studying to become judges. The bar should embrace greater transparency in its fee structure to allow litigants to properly weigh the costs and benefits of pursuing court action, relying on the trusted guidance from the representing lawyer just as the system was intended to work. The number of appeals that lawyers are allowed to make under the procedural codes should be curtailed to halt the clear patterns of abuse occurring at the expense of needy claimants.

The Legal Literacy initiative is an innovative effort and therefore needless to say it's the need of time. The curriculum and contents prepared for Legal Literacy under Access to Justice Project shall definitely help the marginalised communities to consider Law not as a inhibiting factor but an enabling framework to make their lives better with its proper utilisation. With the constant efforts of NGO's and government projects, it shall create a ripple effect to touch millions of marginalised people across the country. Educate them not only to read and write but also seek justice whenever required. We believe that this small effort shall act as a RAY OF HOPE and facilitate the process of ACCESS TO JUSTICE especially for all those who are away from this.

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<sup>34</sup> Ashwaq Masoodi, 'Supreme Court sets up social justice bench', (15 March, 2017; 10:47 PM), [http://www.livemint.com/Politics/vUH4B7kKPH4WcSFbnfhRKP/SC-sets-up-social-justice-bench-to-deal-with-social-issues.html?utm\\_source=ref\\_article](http://www.livemint.com/Politics/vUH4B7kKPH4WcSFbnfhRKP/SC-sets-up-social-justice-bench-to-deal-with-social-issues.html?utm_source=ref_article)