A STEP TOWARDS THE FUTURE: ONLINE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

Technology is the present and future of the Nation. Transforming the right amount of procedures into the technological resolutions available are not intact and yet have to be strongly armed by its implementation and spreading awareness for the society. Resolving disputes via the digital help available can be a bit tricky for most people who are not aware of the technologically oriented framework. The COVID-19 pandemic needs to require changes that are both versatile and inventive, remembering those for the question goal biological system. Across the globe, both private debate goal focuses and legal authorities have changed their administrations to address the issues of the local area directly following the pandemic. Legal authorities have adjusted their techniques to guarantee the opportune reaction of cases, while private dispute resolutions have extended their administrations to take special care of the local area. This has led to increased demand for dispute resolution services, which has in turn increased the profitability of the industry. The advent of online dispute resolution (ODR) has revolutionized the way we resolve our disputes, be they small or large. ODR platforms allow users to submit cases online and allow an automated process to resolve the disputes. During the pandemic various website were responsible for the smooth functioning of the legal system and whereas, online dispute resolution can be traced back in past time as wellmost online fashion sites use to resolve their dispute via online dispute settlement system which gave an expansion to this whole system. The benefit of using an ODR platform is that users don't have to hire a lawyer or go through the lengthy process of filing a case in courts. ODR uses an automated process to resolve disputes, which saves users time and money. Still there are some aspects which are still need to be examined and challenges to overcome.

Keywords: Technology, Dispute Resolution, Justice, Alternative Resolution, Mediation Arbitration, India
Introduction

The judicial system in India is often criticized for its inefficiencies, delays and its perceived bias in favour of the rich and powerful. The COVID-19 pandemic has only added to the long list of complaints against the judicial system. There is, in particular, a lot of delay in the judicial system of India. This is because of the sheer volumes of cases that are filed across the country and the resultant logjam in the system. This is particularly problematic in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the entire system has come under increased scrutiny. The disputes that arise out of the pandemic are of such a nature that they require an entirely different approach. The judicial system is not equipped to deal with such disputes and is, thus, causing a lot of delay in the process. ODR has emerged as the preferred choice of dispute resolution in this scenario. ODR was in justice system since 1990s, whilst the pandemic, it has gain its virtual existence with more interactive aspect. The statutes which operate concurrently with the Dispute resolutions are the, Consumer protection act, 2019, Companies act, 2013, Family Courts act, 1984, Arbitration and Conciliation Act 1996, along with UN conference on global settlement agreements etc. which govern mediation process.

Internet and web-based technology can also be used in a variety of ways. Parties concerned in a disagreement can exploit the internet and web-based expertise to communicate with each other, including using email and online chat. The use of internet and web-based technology in dispute resolution has the latent to improve dispute resolution in India. Online dispute resolution is cheaper and faster than traditional dispute resolution methods. Internet-based dispute resolution can be done in entity through online email, chat, videoconferencing, and social media.¹

Online commerce has become a dominant force in our economy. It has transformed the way we shop, the way we bank, the way we invest, and the way we find almost any product or service we can imagine. The internet has been the catalyst for this unprecedented explosion of commerce, but it has also opened up entirely new ways of doing business. One of the newest and fastest-growing areas of online commerce is e-commerce, or the buying and selling of goods and services online. ODR is an emerging field in dispute resolution, which has gained significant attention in the recent times. ODR is a type of online dispute resolution that is used

¹Authors: Deepak Verma, Anshu Banwari, Neerja Pande, And Deepak Anshu Banwari.(2018) “Online Dispute Resolution”
in situations where the parties to dispute are located in different countries and jurisdictions.\(^2\) In an interview in 2018, the then Minister for Communications and IT, Ravi Shankar Prasad, said that this would be the biggest revolution in India’s judicial process.

On the contrary, umpteen complaints have been made against ODR centers, most of which are baseless. ODR has been effective in resolving disputes, but it has also come under fire for various reasons.\(^3\) The rise of online dispute solving method has fueled another expectation; yet being going great isn’t going. Ergo, this ineffectiveness National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) has been reliable, but not foolproof. NIXI has been able to deal with the majority of the cyber attack due to its reliability, but it has also been unable to prevent the attacks entirely. With the increase in cyber attacks, NIXI has had to increase its security measures. This has resulted in degradation in the response time of NIXI, which is already on the slower side.

**Establishments of Online Dispute Resolution**

The judiciary in India has given immense support for ODR both in regards of judges and administrative staff. The Supreme Court has directed all the High Courts in the country to make ODR centers operational. All the High Courts have also asked the Advocates-on-Record (AORs) to provide free services to the victims of cyber crimes. The Chief Justice of India has also asked the state governments to make necessary arrangements for ODR. This gave a major downside to the ODR area. Nonetheless, it is to be noticed that the legal choices that have set the establishment for future ODR coordination (like the acknowledgment of online intervention or electronic records as proof) have additionally not been without analysis. This is a region that requires further turn of events and refinement.

The RBI has been the first government department to come up with an ODR policy for digital payments. This has set a precedent for other government departments and ministries to follow suit. For instance, the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) has come up with an ODR policy for the MSME sector.

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\(^3\) Anuragk Agarwal. IsIndia Ready for Online Dispute Resolution? <http://vslr.iima.ac.in:8080/jspui/bitstream/11718/225/1/2006-10-03_aagarwal.pdf>
The presentation of the SAMADHAAN entryway and the Department of Legal Affairs is currently gathering the subtleties of ODR specialist co-ops the nation over. The Ministry of Electronics and IT (Meity) has also come up with a policy for the e-governance sector.

Another angle that prepares India ODR is its authoritative readiness. However in a piecemeal design, there are various help regulations which give authoritative sponsorship to the ADR viewpoint. For instance, the Consumer Protection Act and the provisions of the Digital India Programme incorporate provisions for online dispute resolution. The e-commerce laws also mandate the use of ADR for resolving disputes.

The first challenge that needs to be addressed is regarding the access to justice. A lot of the disputes that arise on the internet are due to a lack of knowledge on the part of the parties. This can be addressed by providing easy access to the ODR platform. The parties can be assisted through videos and live explanations.⁴

The most prominent cases which gave rise to the evolution of ODR are eBay Pilot Project - the origin of ODR projects were established in 1996 in the University of Massachusetts and the University of Maryland. ODR projects were initiated in India in 2007 by the National Informatics Centre (NIC); a wing of the Department of Electronics (DoE). The debate goal framework was additionally expected to address the questions starting from business exercises over the web, like web based business. It was clear that a robust and effective system was required to deal with these disputes. The internet and e-commerce had expanded rapidly in the late 1990s, and it was imperative that a robust and effective dispute resolution system was in place to address the disputes that were being caused by these developments.

In 1999, eBay began a pilot task to give online intercession offices to debates emerging among purchasers and venders. The pilot project took care of 200 questions in a fourteen day time span, by a long shot the biggest number of debates at any point dealt with on the web. It provoked eBay to remember debate goal as a contribution for its site. This was the first step in the evolution of ODR. Over the years, more and more dispute resolution services have been introduced on the internet, with a variety of applications.

Turning towards the position in India, recently NITI AYOG has taken an initiative to towards ODR on sixth June 2020, which, as a team with common society also different associations,

directed a virtual interview named, 'Catalyzing On the web Debate Goal in India'. The objective was to join key accomplices to discuss the manner by which ODR can be introduced in India. The event included senior adjudicators of the High Court, secretaries from key Government Services, industrialists, authentic subject matter experts, and general direction of driving endeavors.

The all-encompassing objective of the panel is to foster an activity plan that can support the empowerment of ODR in India. The particular goals with which the board has set up:

I. Recognizing and revising existing regulations/guidelines/rules to empower ODR;
II. Recognizing and working with methodologies to take on ODR for the purpose of dispute resolution in significant areas;
III. Breaking down worldwide prescribed procedures in ODR, explicitly for dispute averting, suppression and goal to suggest appropriate model for justice conveyance;
IV. Teaming up with the legal executive, industry, and the environment in general for ODR; and
V. Some other matter alluded to the Advisory group by the Director in light of a legitimate concern for admittance to Justice.

The whole idea was consulted by The Committee on Online Dispute Resolution was set up under the authority of Hon’ble Justice (Retd) A.K Sikri. The Committee held consultations with stakeholders and discussed the issues related to online dispute resolution in India. The Committee also reviewed the literature on the subject and the best practices in other countries.

The apex court in State of Maharashtra v. Dr Praful B Desai,\(^5\) held that all the evidence of the witnesses to be taken in video conferencing mode, which fulfills the object of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Also keeping in mind, the pandemic situation the Supreme Court even suo moto writ petition\(^6\) take necessary steps under Art 141 and 142 of constitution by extending the limitation period for filing suits.

**Providing Justice via Technology**

The history of technology is littered with several inventions that have changed the world. Many of the inventions have been credited to the advent of the Internet. The Internet has arisen as

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\(^5\)AIR (1972)4 SCC 23  
\(^6\)Civil No. 3/2020
one of the most critical and progressive developments within recent memory. It has been able to connect people from all over the world and has also been used to spread information faster than ever before.

The Internet has a large number of applications. One of them is dispute resolution. Dispute resolution is also one of the applications of the Internet. With expansion in globalization of business, the business questions are likewise turning out to be increasingly more worldwide in character. The customary strategies for goal of such business questions have become over the top expensive and consume a great deal of time. Case was never the strategy for decision for goal of worldwide business debates.

The American Bar Association (ABA) has effectively upheld the utilization of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) strategies previously. With the coming of the web, another strategy for question goal has advanced - Online Dispute Resolution. As per the American Bar Association Task Force on ECommerce and ADR, the strategies were inclined toward.

The central participants in ODR are the business local area, shoppers, the public authority and the ADR organizations. The business local area favors ODR as it is private, quick and cheap. It likewise urges purchasers to record questions on the web. The shoppers, then again, favor ODR as it is speedy, advantageous and affordable. For buyer associations, ODR implement customer privileges. States consider ODR to be an instrument to give admittance to equity that courts are not yet prepared to give. In this situation, ODR gives a chance to diminish court blockage and to give equity to the majority. For ventures, ODR is an instrument to determine debates and to safeguard protected innovation.

The use of data correspondence innovation (ICT) is developing as a significant method for future goal of specific kinds of contention. As of now, we have seen the rise of online question goal (ODR). ODR has the potential to revolutionize the judicial system. ODR is a platform that enables parties to resolves their disputes without having to go through the lengthy legal process.⁷

**Types of ODR Websites**

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⁷Eugene Clark, George Cho & Arthur Hoyle: *Online Dispute Resolution: Present Realities, Pressing Problems And Future Prospects*
A. **VMP**(Virtual magistrate project) VMP is first ever ADR online sites which resolves dispute using internet based allegation such as copyright, trademark, infringement of privacy, defamation fraud etc. NCAIR both encouraged the VMP.  
Whole process runs via e-mails. The party making a complaint has to state all the fact along with the opposite party. Thereafter, the VCILP will review the complaint and initiates the proceedings. VMP will look at all the Applicable laws and the contract involved between the parties to come at a mutual settlement.

B. **Online ombuds office (ooo)** it was first established in 1996 and is more Complex version of VMP. OOO is an ombudsman person who acts as a mediator to resolve the dispute same as like of VMP. The ombudsman contact to the parties involved by sending an email explaining all the details of the procedure. The similarity between the VMP and OOO is that they provide free cost service, saving the expense as compared to the traditional litigation. The most resolved cases by OOO include eBay Up4scale and Trademark dispute.

C. **WIPO World Intellectual Property organization.** Every system differs from one another while most of them follow the procedure for arbitration of domain name dispute and other IP dispute. WIPO resolves the dispute using syncrononouns platforms like online chatting as well as audio or video conferencing the party who alleges that he has an infringement on his Intellectual Property Rights can apply to WIPO Centre for online mediation.

D. **Settlement mechanism** unlike all the traditional ADR system the online dispute resolution does not work with the third party involvement. It only involves monetary redresses in dispute mechanism for the parties make to come under a mutual agreement the second party responds to the counter offer, where the computer act as a arbitrator .if the party does not come to a particular conclusion then they can go for higher stage pay service to settle the dispute.

**Process of Online Dispute Resolution**

The very first step for the parties is to choose for the ODR provider period.

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8Friedman, G. H. (1996). *Alternative Dispute Resolution And Emerging Online Technologies: Challenges And Opportunities.* Hastingscomm.&Ent.LJ,19,695. [https://repository.uchastings.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1466&context=hastings_comm_ent_law_journal]


I. Crucial that the parties must be aware of the regulation, they have to follow and have to collect all the important facts and document to support their defense.

II. The ODR provider will determine the rules. Basically the very next step the parties have to take is to decide whether they have to go for ODR process or through a neutral party.

III. The parties have to decide what their interests are and is there any way to have a win-win situation and to come up with a mutual benefit solution. Overall it is an effective communication which is necessary. Whereas, if any difficulty is received during the Communications the parties can draw their attention to the ODR provider or to the neutral person for the solutions.

Advantages of ODR

The coordination of ICT into debate goal processes gives massive potential to beat difficulties normally connected with Courts and those that have come to torment the framework. The use of ICT in the enforcement of legal orders has been one of the most effective mechanisms in ODR. This is because it provides an additional layer of security to the process. The information that is available about the dispute is enough to act upon, thereby eliminating the need for ex parte orders in many cases.

I. Speed: The legal system of India is slow and unpredictable, particularly in comparison other countries in the world. The fact that this speed is an essential feature of the legal system of India. As a matter of fact, judicial proceedings are time-consuming due to the fact that the process is lengthy, with a lot of time spent on hearings. The advent of the internet and e-commerce has revolutionized the way businesses are conducted. Gone are the days when businesses operated on a local level. Today, businesses are conducted on a global scale. This has required the improvement of a strong framework to address the questions that might emerge from business exercises directed over the internet. ODR is without a doubt significantly more helpful than the typical Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) or suit. It would be an exceptionally appealing element for individuals who as of now approach different frameworks of question goal. The utilization of ODR will diminish the expense of question goal essentially. It will likewise get an immense volume of debates, accordingly guaranteeing its

Chaudhary, V. Online Dispute Resolution. <https://licitgist.in/online-dispute-resolution/>
profitability. The accommodation of ODR is an extra benefit for the exclusive class of the general public. Be that as it may, in the event that ODR makes colossal progress versus business questions in India, a similar will be accessible to the average person too. This will further enhance access to justice and thereby benefit the consumers as a whole.

II. **Cost efficient:** ODR can help decide disputes in a much more lucrative manner than traditional; this is clear in cases including worldwide business questions. Extra expenses of board and housing are saved from being incurred, as the disputes are resolved in a neutral forum. This also applies to situations where the parties are based out of the same city where the court is situated. There are a number of other benefits that accrue from the use of ODR, such as the time and cost savings involved in dispute resolution, the speed with which disputes are resolved, and the reduction in the number of disputes that arise between the parties.

III. **Accessibility of data easily:** One of the biggest challenges facing the Indian judicial system is the storage of documents. The lower courts in India are often flooded with documents from the floor to the ceiling. This makes it difficult for the courts to find a specific document on schedule. The records of cases documented in courts the nation over are likewise undependable from termites, leakage of downpour water, and overabundance mugginess through the dividers or annihilated because of short out of electric wires. This has led to a delay in the proceedings of cases and has also caused a lot of unnecessary inconvenience to the litigants and the courts. With the advent of the digital storage, the data created can be easily retrieved as and when required. This has brought with it a great deal of convenience, as the data is now easily accessible and can be retrieved at any point in time.

IV. **Confidentiality:** The matter being discussed and resolved are confidential, as compared to public hearing in traditional judicial system. The use of technology in ODR not only reduces the time taken to resolve a dispute, but also reduces the cost. ODR has also been effective in addressing the concerns of the stakeholders, including the consumers. The process is managed by a dispute resolution administrator, who is independent of the parties involved in the dispute. The ODR administrator neutralizes the inherent biases of the judicial system and resolves the dispute in favour of the party that is preponderant on the facts and law. The process is low-cost, fast and effective.

V. **Flexible mechanism:** This allows parties to participate in the process in a meaningful way and to have a say in how disputes are resolved. This empowers parties and makes the process more accessible and efficient.
them more likely to participate in ongoing proceedings, which in turn fosters greater trust and reliability in the dispute resolution ecosystem. ODR allows parties to shape every aspect of the process in which they are involved. ODR allows parties to be involved in the managerial process, ensuring that their needs are fulfilled and their voices are heard. It also allows them to challenge decisions that are not in their best interests or that fail to take their circumstances into account. ODR also provides a platform for parties to build relationships with skilled professionals with whom they can discuss their cases, regardless of the outcome. This helps parties build confidence and gain a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities. ODR cycles can reduce the oblivious predisposition of the Neutral, which can be a wellspring of bad form. ODR Platforms, particularly those in light of text and email, disconnect general media prompts connecting with the orientation of the parties, which reduces the gender bias of the Neutral. ODR can also be used to increase the representativeness of the Neutral and provide greater autonomy to the party.

**Weaknesses of ODR**

The good is always followed by the virtue of evil. If there are some advantages of ODR in India and has a vast scope, there are some weakness and disadvantages, to implement it in India. Such as:

I. **Factor of Trust:** The Supreme Court and High Courts are widely acclaimed for their independence, integrity and fairness. This respect for the court system is largely due to the trust that the individuals have in them. It isn't realized the amount of trust and certainty individuals possess in ODR organizations. This is primarily due to the limited experience of the general public with online dispute resolution.

II. **Language barrier:** India is divided into many languages and dialects and people in different parts of the country use different languages, and dialects. This has made India’s internet market fragmented. Due to this, people in rural areas use different languages and dialects to access the internet unlike people in urban areas. Along these lines, making it challenging for certain individuals to get to the internet and to know the technicality of the ODR system.  

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12RS Chouhan: *Streamlining Online Dispute Resolution with the Alternative dispute Resolution: Chances and Challenges*
III. ODR or ADR not Appropriate for every conflict: ADR and ODR are two dispute resolution mechanisms that are not reasonable for all questions. Inquiries of complicated legitimate intricacy require a court of law. The internet is a vast and complicated space and the judicial system is not well-equipped to deal with such disputes. ODR, being an online platform, cannot deal with complex legal issues. The Supreme Court and High Courts in India are autonomous and deserve huge admiration. Matters of criminal nature, such as murder, rape and dowry deaths, what's more, matters of a marital sort, for example, debates in regards to property and upkeep, and matters including freedoms of the residents against the state are a portion of the models which can't be chosen by the ODR framework. The courts in India have always been the final authority and have never accepted the decisions of the ODR system, in such matter.

Is India Prepared For ODR?

The ODR system is rising with the vibe in the justice system. The statues like Evidence act, 1872, along with the arbitration Act 1996 and IT act, 2000 it is visible that there is a viability for the ODR functioning. With the increasing demand of e-commerce and dispute related settlement outside the court is also on the hike. Whereas, the analogous system of the justice system, where parties have to be physically present at the venue, is changing its course to the dynamic arena where the party can be present at anywhere in the world, while resolving their dispute which is contrary to the traditional system.

During the pandemic everything goes digital, from buying groceries to the apex Judicial system. The online platforms which are responsible for the growth of ODR are SAMA, PRESOLV360 and NIXI, which streamlines the working of every institution in sync with the developing nation. The recent case states as:

The supreme court in a writ petition (suo moto) mentioned as (Expeditious Trial cases of N.I. Act 1881(Sec 138), Meters & Instrument Pvt Lmt & Anr. v. Kanchan Mehta13

"The system of justice in India is largely paper-based. Most of the judgments and orders are passed in writing and stored in files. The system also requires a large number of staff to operate. As the population grows and the per capita income increases, the overcrowding of courts becomes a serious problem. The internet,

13 Criminal Appeal No. 1732 OF 2017 (Indian Kanoon)
particularly the internet in India, has seen numerous disputes over the years. The internet, however, is not limited to commerce. It has also been used for other activities, including social media and e-commerce. The internet has also witnessed numerous disputes, in some cases, of a criminal nature, where online justice cannot be provided to the victim as a thorough Investigation has to be conducted."

Each sheet of paper requires raw materials, manufacturing processes and transport. The ODR ecosystem requires only neutral forums, which use a limited amount of paper. ODR also has a low operational cost. Thus, making it environmental friendly saving upto billions of paper.14

With the advent of technology, the process of dispute resolution can be made more efficient. Another viewpoint that prepares India ODR is its administrative readiness. However in a piecemeal design, there are various help regulations which give official support to the ADR ecosystem. The most significant of these are the Alternate Dispute Resolution Act, 2017, the Consumer Protection Bill, 2018, the evidence act etc. The United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation, 2018, is an important step in the direction of ODR. The Convention, which has been ratified by India, will help to promote the use of ODR and reduce the usage of litigation in the country.15

Existence Of ODR In Future

We are still in a weak position to act independently on technology, concerning about the confidentiality, weak data protection laws along with party autonomy. And, the traditional courts are still struggling to juggle N no. of cases physically. However, there are still disputes which are resolved virtually during the course of pandemic and the time has come to curb those weaknesses and to shift our focus to strengthening the Digital future16. Subsidizing in more efficient technology can make Indian virtual justice system more progressive.

Comparing the situation, with the International organization and their regulations, European Union has the most effective ODR methods to resolve alternative disputes, control its own ODR stage, which has been in activity beginning around 2016. This new techniques for alternative dispute resolution by the method of web has acquired ubiquity, in the nations like

15Ibid (p.2)
U.S.A, Europe and worldwide rules support for the future ODR is astoundingly remarkable. Hence, ODR will soon, become the method of intervention for the whole world and the need for each disputant. Concerning India, the development of innovation and the patterns of intervention, have quickly developed since the beyond couple of years.\textsuperscript{17}

Conclusion

The first and foremost challenge in the mainstreaming of ODR is the availability of quality ODR platforms. So far, only a few ODR platforms have gained prominence, which may not be the most reliable. This needs to be improved upon so that more people are encouraged to use ODR. Secondly, the process of ODR needs to be simplified. Language is a major challenge for ODR. The sub continental nature of the Indian population makes communication a difficult challenge. This has led to the emergence of several ODR platforms that are aimed at providing services in regional languages.

The success of NIXI has also given a big flip to the online commerce in India as parties dealing in online commerce can now access the platform, which is reliable and cost effective. The online commerce in India has also, in turn, given a flip to the e-commerce industry, which in turn, has given a flip to the economy of the country. India is a country of 1.3 billion people, of whom large majorities are tech-savvy. Indians have readily assimilated cultures and technologies, and their embracing of ODR is a testament to their ability to adapt to new systems. The future of ODR in India looks bright. A lot needs to be done, though, to improve the infrastructure, the availability of skilled ODR professionals and the awareness about ODR amongst the public and the legal fraternity.

The next step in the evolution of ODR is to advance it so that it becomes an integral and crucial part of the system. This will work with worldwide congruity and support global connections in cross-line questions. Further, it will also help to save the environment as paper is used in large numbers. The step to advance ODR is a key to these objectives. Also, is the most prominent solution, persisting in the pandemic.\textsuperscript{18}

An investigation of the present status of the Indian debate goal environment, the difficulties that it is right now confronting, the job that ODR can play coming down the line for question

\textsuperscript{17}EuropeanUnionDisputeResolutionWebsite:<https://ec.europa.eu/consumers/odr/main/index.cfm?event=main.home2.show&lng=EN>
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid p. 18
goal in India, and the manners by which ODR can be advanced in India. ADR can possibly alter debate goal in India. The present status of the debate goal environment in India is appalling. Along these lines, towards this methodology, the Government might consider taking a more proactive approach to guide the development and use of these advanced technologies in dispute resolution. This should be guided by the principles of justice and fairness. The Government should examine the use of artificial intelligence technology in dispute resolution. The Government should also consider setting up a separate authority for ODR, which would have the mandate to regulate ODR and promote and regulate the use of ODR in India.

The lawful adage ‘Justice delayed is justice denied' actually intends that on the off chance that the justice is managed in additional time, it is comparable to justice not served by any stretch of the imagination. The postponement in the method of justice has significant expenses of entanglements. It brings about the deficiency of confidence and accepts, of individuals in the organization of justice by the Indian legal framework. Consequently, these alternative dispute resolution strategies are quick and obviously better, than the customary inflexible techniques, in tackling questions.