

# "The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act: Strengthening Democracy or Symbolic Reform?"

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51584/IJRIAS.2026.11030008>

Received: 04 March 2026; Accepted: 09 March 2026; Published: 26 March 2026

## ABSTRACT

Corruption continues to threaten the democratic governance in India. The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 symbolizes a landmark step in India's fight against corruption, promising to institutionalize accountability and strengthen governance in the country. This paper critically examines the effectiveness of the Lokpal through doctrinal analysis, performance assessment and comparative perspectives with international ombudsman institutions. Findings reveal that despite its "transformative" potential the Lokpal's operational record remains weak and merely symbolic with negligible prosecutions. While the legislation created an independent anti-corruption ombudsmen at the central and state levels, its implementation has been marred by delays in appointment, political resistance and structural limitations. Comparative analysis with Hong Kong's ICAC and Scandinavian Ombudsmen highlights the importance of autonomy, constitutional entrenchment and prosecutorial effectiveness. Recommendations are proposed to strengthen the Lokpal's role as a genuine pillar of democratic accountability.

**Keywords:** Lokpal, corruption, accountability, ombudsman, good governance.

## INTRODUCTION

Good governance is the hallmark of democracy and is characteristic of an efficient system of governance that is devoid of corruption. Corruption maligns the integrity of the government and erodes public trust, therefore diligent efforts must be made to tackle the issue of corruption. The institution of Lokpal in India is accredited with being the apex anti-corruption watchdog, which is tasked with the responsibility of securing socio economic justice and equitable distribution of wealth, the cherished goals which are enshrined in the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution of India, under Art. 38 and 39. It has been established as a statutory body by the Parliament of India via the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 (Act No. 1 of 2014). This legislation endeavours to target and combat corruption, prevalent in and affecting the highest levels of governance and align India's governance framework with international commitments under the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2004). The term 'Lokpal' which translates to the 'protector/ caretaker of people', was coined by Dr L.M. Singhvi in 1963 (Bansal, Viamediation Centre, n.d.) and it owes its origin to the concept of an 'Ombudsman' like institution which was operational in Scandinavian countries. This paper critically examines the effectiveness of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 through a three dimensional framework: (i) doctrinal analysis of statutory provisions, (ii) institutional performance assessment using complaint statistics and (iii) comparative governance analysis with ombudsman institutions abroad. This will help to evaluate whether the Lokpal has fulfilled its promise in reality or merely symbolically.

## Historical Background of The Lokpal And Lokayuktas Act, 2013

The idea of establishing an Indian Ombudsman transpired in the halls of the Indian Parliament in the year 1963 when a need was felt to establish such an institution, in order to promote good governance in the country by eradicating the corruption that was slowly eroding the fabric of our government. The Lokpal Bill was introduced in 1968 by the revered former Law Minister Mr. Shanti Bhushan, but it failed to get the approval of the Parliament (Bansal, Viamediation Centre, n.d.). Over the following decades, successive governments introduced

Lokpal Bills (1971, 1977, 1985, 1989, 1996, 1998 and 2001) but none were enacted. The First Administrative Reforms Commission (1966) under the leadership of Mr. Morarji Desai and later the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2005) both recommended the establishment of an impartial and independent anti-corruption authority, yet political consensus remained elusive.

The turning point came in 2011 when the ‘India Anti-Corruption’ movement, pioneered by the Mr. Anna Hazare galvanised public opinion (Sharma, 2023). Combined with India’s ratification of the UNCAC, this pressure culminated in the passage of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act in 2013. The establishment of the Lokpal reflects a careful shift from ad-hoc anti-corruption efforts to a permanent accountability mechanism that was not merely a symbolic concession to public sentiment.

### **Institutional Design And Provisions Of The Lokpal And Lokayuktas Act, 2013**

The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 (hereinafter, Act of 2013) provides for the establishment of a Lokpal at the central level and the Lokayuktas at the state level, who are to address the complaints and allegations of corruption against certain public functionaries (Wadhwan, 2025). This statutory body comprises of a chairman and 8 members, who are drawn from judicial and varied social backgrounds as mentioned under the provisions of sec. 3, 5 and 6 of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013. The jurisdiction of the Lokpal as per sec. 14(1)(a)-(h) of the Act, extends to the Prime Minister, Union Ministers, Members of Parliament, senior bureaucrats and officials of central government established entities. On paper, this design is reflective of India’s commitment to the policy of “zero tolerance against corruption” and aligns with the international standards laid down in the UNCAC.

Yet the institutional framework raises several analytical concerns:

#### **Composition and selection of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas:**

The Lokpal is bestowed with the status of a statutory body, which consists of a Chairman and 8 members, while the inclusion of judges and representatives from diverse social backgrounds and marginalized sections aims to ensure credibility and impartiality, the vague criteria for considering who shall be considered to be an “eminent jurist” and the opaque selection process led by the selection committee<sup>1</sup> weakens the public confidence in this institution. Sec. 63 of the Act of 2013, mandates the appointment of a Lokayukta within one year of the commencement of this Act. The procedure regarding the appointments to the office of the Lokayuktas is governed by the respective state legislation which establishes the Lokayukta. Comparative ombudsman models, such as those in Scandinavian countries, stress on transparent appointment procedure, suggesting that India’s framework is susceptible to politicization (Gowda, 2023)

#### **Benches of the Lokpal:**

The jurisdiction of the Lokpal is exercised by its Benches. The Chairman has the authority to constitute a Bench<sup>2</sup> which shall ordinarily sit at New Delhi or such other place as the Lokpal may specify as mentioned under sec. 16 and 17 of the Act, 2013, and he may also allocate the matters to be adjudicated by the Benches. In the last F.Y i.e. 2024-2025 a total of 184 bench sittings were held by the Lokpal (Lokpal of India, 2025).

#### **Jurisdiction of the Lokpal and its limitation:**

The Lokpal has the jurisdiction to entertain complaints with respect to claims of disproportionate assets, non-performance of official duties, irregularities in recruitment, contracts and public procurements, allegations of corruption and deficiency of service, against the public servants mentioned in the Act of 2013<sup>3</sup>. However, matters relating to external security, international relations, atomic energy and public order, are excluded from the

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<sup>1</sup> Sec. 4 of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 provides that the selection committee shall consist of the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, the Chief Justice of India or in his absence a judge of the Supreme Court nominated by him and an eminent jurist.

<sup>2</sup> Consisting of minimum 2 members of which one member must belong to a judicial background.

<sup>3</sup> As defined under s. 2 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 read with s.14 of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013.

purview of the Lokpal's jurisdiction. The judiciary is excluded from the ambit of Lokpal's jurisdiction and as per sec. 53 of the Act and embargo has been placed on the cognizance power of the Lokpal i.e. complaints against public servants for incidents that have taken place 7 years prior to the making of the complaint are excluded from the purview of the Lokpal. These exclusions reflect a significant gap in accountability of this institution and renders its effectiveness to a merely symbolic status.

### **Complaint Handling Mechanism:**

The unique feature of the complaint handling mechanism of the Lokpal is that it maintains the confidentiality of the complainant's identity as required by the Lokpal (Complaint) Rules, 2020, Rule 4(a). The Act of 2013 enables every person<sup>4</sup> to file a written complaint as per Rule 3, either by post or online on its official website addressed to the Lokpal. The format compliance guidelines are mentioned in the Rules appended to this legislation and no fee needs to be paid in order to file a complaint. The Lokpal, as per the powers enlisted under s.20(1)(a),(b), can order a preliminary inquiry into the complaint either by its own Inquiry Wing or any other specialized agency like the Delhi Special Police Establishment, to decide whether a prima facie case exists while also giving an opportunity of representation to the concerned public servant as reiterated by the Hon'ble Delhi High Court (Mujahat Ali Khan v. Lokpal of India through Under Secretary, W.P. (c) 16035/2025, 2025).

### **Investigative and Judicial Powers of the Lokpal:**

The Lokpal's is bestowed with the powers of a Civil Court and it also exercises supervision over agencies like the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) and the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE). Such powers enable the Lokpal to effectively gather evidence in the case under inquiry. The Lokpal has the power to sanction prosecution of public servants involved in the cases of corruption as per s. 23 of the Act. However, provisions such as Sec. 17 A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, dilute its autonomy since the statutory embargo under that section requires the Lokpal to seek approval even prior to conducting a preliminary inquiry against a public servant, this acts as a hurdle in the Lokpal's autonomy of function and therefore the Hon'ble Supreme Court has held that this section will not apply to cases where Lokpal can directly investigate into cases pertaining to demand for bribes or illegal gratification which does not fall under the category of an act done in discharge of official duty (Anil Daima etc. v. State of Rajasthan and Ors, S.L.P (Crl.) Nos. 1010-1011/2026, 2026).

### **Operational effectiveness:**

Though the Act of 2013 establishes an Inquiry Wing and a Prosecution Wing to initiate prosecution proceedings against public servants but delayed appointments to these offices and the absence of notified "Special Courts" further undermines the institutions capacity to deliver timely justice. As per the latest data recorded in its Report for the year of 2025-26 (Lokpal.o., 2025), the Lokpal has ordered investigations in 7 cases only but has not given its sanction of prosecution in any case.

### **Performance Assessment Of The Lokpal (2014-2026)**

Since its inception the Lokpal has received a total of 17,523 complaints and out of those only 7,040 were registered. Investigation was ordered in merely 40 cases and only seven prosecutions have been sanctioned in the last twelve years. In the last F.Y (2025-2026) the Lokpal received 424 complaints and out of those only 318 were registered. A preliminary inquiry was ordered in only 62 cases and a total of 7 cases qualified for investigations into the allegations of corruption. However, it is important to mention that in the year 2025 not even a single sanction for prosecution was awarded (Lokpal, 2025). Taking into consideration this statistical data, it can be prudently deduced that the institution of the Lokpal has delivered a suboptimal level performance. While the Lokpal was designed to serve as a apex-level anti-corruption agency, its operational record reflects a limited institutional impact. Case studies substantiate this point as

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<sup>4</sup> This includes individual (citizen or otherwise), society, association of persons, trust, company, corporation etc.

- The Mahua Moitra cash-for-query scandal<sup>5</sup> demonstrated the Lokpal's willingness to act against prominent figures, but procedural lapses resulted in judicial setbacks (PTI, 2026).
- The Shibu Soren disproportionate assets case exhibited the Lokpal's capacity to withstand political pressure, yet the investigation remains ongoing (Wilson, 2024).
- The SAIL- Avon Steel scam<sup>6</sup> highlighted the Lokpal's supervisory role in triggering CBI action, but the outcomes have been slow (Raj, 2025).

From an institutional performance perspective, the Lokpal has functioned more as a referral and supervisory body than as a proactive prosecutorial agency. Trend analysis suggests that while the public participation in filing complaints has grown, the conversion of these complaints into concrete and meaningful prosecutions remains negligible. This gap between statutory promise and practical delivery raises doubts about whether the Lokpal is fulfilling its democratic mandate or serving merely as a symbolic gesture of reform. In order to eradicate the large scale corruption prevalent in the country, dedicated efforts towards strengthening the institution of the Lokpal are required, only that would lead to the fulfilment of the "Government's commitment to clean and responsive governance"<sup>7</sup>.

### Critical Analysis: Effectiveness Or Symbolic Reform?

The empirical data of the Lokpal from the year 2019 to 2025 reveals a striking gap between statutory promise and institutional performance. While over 17,500 complaints have been received since inception, only 7,040 were registered, and a mere 40 investigations were ordered. Most tellingly, only seven prosecutions have been sanctioned in twelve years. In the financial year 2025–26 alone, 424 complaints were filed, yet only 62 preliminary inquiries and seven investigations were initiated, with no prosecutions sanctioned. These figures underscore the limited impact of the Lokpal as an anti-corruption authority.

### Institutional Bottlenecks:

The high rejection rate of complaints, often at the threshold stage for lack of format compliance or jurisdiction and merit, indicates that procedural hurdles are undermining accessibility. The complex format requirements introduced in 2020 Rules and the Circular (The Lokpal of India, Circular No. 01/2025) have further contributed to exclusion, raising questions about whether the Lokpal is designed to facilitate citizen participation or to filter it out.

### Delayed Appointments:

The Lokpal is often called the "toothless tiger", a metaphoric reference to the weakness in its operationalization, despite the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act being passed in the year 2013, it was only in the year 2019 that the first Lokpal<sup>8</sup> was appointed. The provision as to the appointment of Lokayuktas for the states was also not strictly complied with. The provision for the establishment of the office of Lokayukta for the Union Territories (UTs) has not been specifically dealt with and there are few UTs<sup>9</sup> which do not have a functional Lokayukta. It is important to note that in the year 2016, the Supreme Court had directed the State of Uttar Pradesh to expeditiously appoint a Lokayukta but the nonchalance of the government compelled the Court to use its

<sup>5</sup> The TMC MP was expelled from the Lok Sabha in 2023 pursuant to the allegations of corruption for asking questions in the Parliament.

<sup>6</sup> The renowned "Avon Steel Industries Private Limited (AS IPL)" had recently fallen under the scrutiny of the Lokpal of India, with regards to an alleged scam involving "the sale of steel" done by the "Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL)". Pursuant to the admonition by the Lokpal, in November 2022, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) immediately filed an FIR, alleging a connivance between SAIL officials and ASIPL officials, whereby raw materials were sold to ASIPL at substantially cheaper rates leading to loss and commercial irregularities

<sup>7</sup> Preamble of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 (Act No. 1 of 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Hon'ble Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose, was appointed as the first Lokpal of India on March 19, 2019, and, he served as the Lokpal till the year 2023.

<sup>9</sup> The Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Chandigarh, Puducherry, Lakshadweep, Dadar and Nagar Haveli and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

extraordinary powers under Constitution<sup>10</sup> and consequently the Court itself named Justice Sanjay Mishra as the Lokayukta for the State of U.P (Mahendra Kumar Jain v. Alok Ranjan (2016) 13 SCC 752, 2016). Then again in 2018, the Supreme Court demanded an explanation from the chief secretaries of 12 states<sup>11</sup> as to why no appointment had been made to the office of the Lokayukta and now consequently the appointments have been made in all states.

### **Judicial and Political Constraints:**

The institution of Lokpal has drawn the ire of critics who allege that the Lokpal is the “god of small things” (Mandhani, n.d.), metaphorically meaning that, it has been targeting the ‘small fish’ i.e. cases involving public servants working in the banking sector and those who are “embezzling” salaries of employee and submitting false travel bills. The scarce few but prominent figures who came under the radar of investigation, are the infamous Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Ms. Mahua Moitra and the chief of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) Mr. Shibu Soren, both of whom came under the surveillance of the Lokpal pursuant to the complaints made by MP Mr. Nishikant Dubey of Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). While in many cases the investigations remain stayed by High Courts or the Supreme Court, delaying resolution, the statutory provisions such as Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, requiring prior government approval for inquiries, dilute the Lokpal’s autonomy. These constraints reflect the broader tension between anti-corruption enforcement and political accountability.

### **Supervisory Rather than Proactive Role:**

The Lokpal has functioned more as a supervisory body, referring cases to agencies like the CBI or CVC, rather than exercising its own prosecutorial powers. This is also due to the fact that no appointments have been made to its Inquiry and Prosecution wing thereby leaving the Lokpal no option but to rely on the assistance of the CBI or the CVC, etc. This dependence cripples its institutional identity and raises doubts about its capacity to act independently against entrenched corruption.

### **Symbolic Success vs. Substantive Impact:**

Public engagement is noticeable in the steady inflow of complaints, reflecting trust in the institution. Yet the significantly low rate of conversion of complaints into prosecutions indicates that the Lokpal’s role is largely symbolic. Though its existence satisfies demands for reform but its operational record reflects that its institutional impact is inadequate to deter corruption in practice. Taken together, the statistics and institutional dynamics support the criticism that the Lokpal is a “toothless tiger.” While it embodies the aspiration for clean governance, its limited prosecutorial record and procedural rigidity reveal that it has yet to evolve into a transformative accountability mechanism. Without structural reforms—greater autonomy, streamlined procedures, and functional wings—the Lokpal risks remaining a symbolic concession rather than a substantive guardian of democratic integrity

### **Limited Jurisdiction and limitation clause:**

Another point of criticism is the limitation placed on the power of the Lokpal from exercising jurisdiction over the Judiciary. Despite the pivotal role that the judiciary plays in upholding the rule of law in the country, the Act of 2013, does not grant the Lokpal the jurisdiction to investigate into the allegations of corruption that are levelled on the officers of the judiciary since they do not fall under the definition of ‘public servant’ given under the Act. This lacunae can be seen as a loophole in the anti-corruption framework, as it does not cover the cases of judicial accountability. Another notable point is the limitation clause in the Act of 2013, by which the office of the Lokpal is barred from taking cognizance in cases involving allegations of corruption in cases which are more than 7 years old, i.e. if the corruption occurred 7 years before the complaint was made then the Lokpal does not have jurisdiction to entertain such a complaint. Furthermore, the Lokpal has still not been accorded

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<sup>10</sup> The Constitution of India, art. 142.

<sup>11</sup> State of Delhi, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Telangana, Manipur, Mizoram, Jammu and Kashmir, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh.

with the status of a constitutional body and there is no clear provision for preferring an appeal against the Lokpal by the aggrieved person.

As of last year in November, the Lokpal made headlines for a very infamous reason, the anti-corruption watchdog was bestowed with the tittle of a “ pompous show-dog”, as the Lokpal had floated a tender for the procurement of 7 BMW cars priced at Rs. 70 lakhs each for its members. This is rather unsettling and almost a tragic irony, that the so-called “guardian of integrity” was inclined towards chasing ‘luxury’ over ‘legitimacy’. Critics argue that our “anti-corruption watchdog, it’s more poodle than panther” (Bob, 2025).

### **International Perspective On Ombudsman Institutions:**

A comparison analysis highlights how India’s Lokpal differs from the stronger ombudsman institutions worldwide. For example, in Hong Kong, the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), which was established in the year 1974, is widely accredited with transforming Hong Kong from a society rife with corruption into one of the least corrupt jurisdictions globally, due to its autonomy and prosecutorial effectiveness (Watt, 2024). In contrast, India’s Lokpal still remains dependent on agencies like the CBI, the CVC and the DSPE and requires prior government sanction for inquiries, limiting its independence (Sadashivan & Tabassum, 2024)

The Scandinavian models also provide valuable lessons. For example, Sweden’s Parliamentary Ombudsman, established in the year 1809, enjoys a constitutional status and its jurisdiction extends over the judiciary as well, making it a global role-model of credibility and independence (Kaviyarasu, 2024). Finland and Denmark correspondingly demonstrate how constitutional entrenchment and parliamentary accountability aid in strengthening the ombudsman institutions (Zhuntyrbayev & Massalimova, 2026). In New Zealand the office of the Ombudsman was created in the year 1962 and it is renowned for its citizen-friendly procedures and immense contribution in freedom of information and whistleblower protection (Gowda, Lokpal: An Ombudsman or Political tool? A comparative Study of India, Sweden and the U.K., 2025). Spain in 1981 had established an office of ‘Defensor del Pueblo’, which enjoys the status of a constitutional body, that has the power to challenge laws before the Constitutional Court, bestowing it with an independent-systemic influence beyond individual complaints (Sharma R. , 2024).

These comparisons emphasize that India’s Lokpal remains closer to symbolic reform than substantive enforcement. Inculcating the lessons from the Hong Kong model (autonomy and prosecutorial powers) and the Scandinavian models (constitutional entrenchment and transparency) are crucial for reforming the Lokpal institution in India.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFORM**

Undoubtedly, the Lokpal plays a vital role in a democracy, as it is a tool that can significantly strengthen and foster public trust and accountability in the governance of the country. However, in view of the before mentioned statistic, it is evident that there are certain spheres in which the institution of Lokpal needs to be redesigned, in order to make it more accessible to the public considering the foregoing discussion the following recommendations can be adopted to effectively improve the working of the Lokpal and achieve the objectives of good governance and transparency.

#### *i) Timely recruitment to vacant offices:*

It has been time and again observed that delayed appointments are the main factor, affecting the functioning of the Lokpal. This leads to slowing down of the work and consequently cases involving corruption are not handled effectively. Therefore, timely appointments to vacant positions in the Lokpal would help the system work more effectively.

#### *ii) Transparency in the selection process:*

Given the uncertainty that surround the appointments and selection process to the office of the Lokpal, the confidence of the people as to the impartial nature of this institution is weakened. The Act of 2013 does not

clearly specify the criteria based on which appointments are made, vague terms like “ eminent jurist” are used but the criteria on which eminence can be judged is not clearly laid out, an endeavour should be made to makes the selection process more transparent so that the faith of the people in the system restored.

iii) *Strengthening the Lokayukta institution :*

It has been almost 12 years since the inception of the Act of 2013, but there is still no provision in the Act requiring the appointment of Lokayuktas for the Union Territories, and in the states where the appointment have been made, the working of the agency has not been substantial. This weakens and hinders the efforts towards eradicating corruption at the local level.

iv) *Time bound investigation:*

The data available at the Lokpal website does depict the time taken to dispose of a case but the Act does not make any statutory time frame for the completion of the investigations, it has been time and again observed that extensions are given and the investigations linger on. This acts as a deterrence and discouragement to the complainants.

v) *More functional autonomy:*

Given the magnitude of the problem of corruption, the current pace at which cases are being disposed of and investigations are being conducted at it will take years to resolve this problem. The dependence of the Lokpal on investigating agencies like the CVC, CBI or the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) only hinders the autonomy of the agency as these investigating agencies are directly under the control of the central government and this raises a doubt on the veracity of its reports and impartiality in its working. The Lokpal should be given its own independent investigating agency.

vi) *More public outreach:*

The cumbersome complaint filing mechanism is not people friendly because not every citizen is tech-savvy and can file the complaints in the requisite format. An effort should be made to streamline the complaint filing process and the government should make dedicated efforts to educate the people on how to report cases of corruption.

vii) *Whistleblower protection:*

The Act of 2013 does not provide any protection to the individuals who expose corruption, as it requires the complainant to reveal its identity in order for the complaint to be accepted, however it keeps the identity anonymous, but still, this leads to harassment, intimidation and in certain cases a threat of injury to the whistleblower. The interest of the whistleblowers needs to be protected so that they do not fall victim in this fight against corruption.

viii) *Expansion of jurisdiction to include judiciary:*

There is a debate on whether Lokpal is equipped to take action against judges. The government has not clarified this point and nor has the hon’ble Supreme Court issued any clear directive in this regard.

## CONCLUSION

Tracing the long and arduous journey of the Lokpal of India, stemming from an abstract idea of having an Ombudsman like institution in our country, to finally becoming the beacon of hope in this battle against corruption, the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 encompasses both domestic aspirations for clean governance and international commitments under the UNCAC. Yet more than a decade later, the institution’s performance record reveals a stark and sobering reality: though the Lokpal received over 17,000 complaints, yet a handful have progressed to the stage of investigation, and merely seven prosecutions have been sanctioned. This

significant disparity between statutory design and operational outcomes accentuates the tension between the Lokpal's symbolic presence and its substantive effectiveness.

Through doctrinal analysis, institutional performance assessment and comparative governance perspectives, this paper highlights how the Lokpal's limitations stem from structural weaknesses, opaque appointments, jurisdictional limitations, procedural rigidity and dependence on external investigative agencies. These constraints have reduced the Lokpal to a supervisory body rather than an independent anti-corruption authority. While public engagement remains strong and steady, the negligible conversion of complaints into prosecutions reflects that the Lokpal has yet to fulfil its democratic promise.

The recommendations outlined—timely appointments, transparent selection process, expanded jurisdiction, functional autonomy, simplified procedures, and establishment of Special Courts—are not merely incremental adjustments but absolutely essential reforms needed to transform the Lokpal from a “toothless tiger” into a genuine guardian of accountability. Without these changes, the Lokpal risks remaining a symbolic concession to public sentiment, rather than a substantive instrument of democratic integrity.

Ultimately, it is the future of the Lokpal that will determine whether India's anti-corruption framework evolves into a robust pillar of governance or remains a reminder of reform deferred. Its success lies not in its existence, but in its ability to deliver justice, deter corruption, and strengthen the scaffolding of democracy.

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