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The Future of Legal Technology in India

Rishav Shekhar

India has one of the busiest but also most overloaded legal systems in the world. With more than four crore cases pending in courts, a chronic shortage of judges and a profession that still depends heavily on paper files and in-person hearings, the case for technology has never been more compelling. Legal technology in India is moving from the periphery of the profession to its core, from AI assisted research tools to e-filing systems and online dispute resolution platforms.

Why Legal Tech Matters So Much in India

India's justice system bears a particular burden: its sheer scale. No other democracy has as thin a bench to population ratio as India in processing as many cases. Then there is the linguistic diversity of the country, the physical distance many litigants have to travel to get to a court and the cost and delay involved in traditional litigation, and it's clear why technology isn't a luxury here – it's a necessity. The pandemic was an unintended pilot program. Virtual hearings, once unthinkable for a system that relies on physical presence and oral arguments, became the norm practically overnight. That development showed that Indian courts could act swiftly when they wanted to, and opened the door for bolder digital reforms.

Where Legal Tech Is Already Making a Difference

E-Courts and digital record- The government's e-Courts Mission has put case records online, allowed filing online and made cause lists and judgments searchable from a phone. Things that once needed a trip to the court registrar can now often be checked from a village cybercafé or a lawyer's laptop.

AI-powered legal research- Lawyers using platforms built for the Indian market can search case law, statutes and precedents in a fraction of the time it took to do manual research, freeing up time for actual legal reasoning rather than digging through digests.

Contract review and management- Corporate legal departments are increasingly turning to software to scan contracts for clauses that pose risk, track renewal dates and flag non-standard terms, work that used to take hours of associate time.

Online Dispute Resolution (ODR)- For smaller commercial disputes, consumer complaints and even some family matters, ODR platforms provide a faster, cheaper alternative to full-blown litigation – significant in a country where taking a small claim to court can cost more than the claim itself.

Document automation and legal process outsourcing- India, a hub for legal process outsourcing for global clients, is now turning that same expertise inward, automating routine drafting, due diligence and compliance work for Indian businesses.

What the Coming Years Might Offer

Predictive Analytics for Case Outcomes- As more judgments are digitised, tools that analyse how individual courts or judges have ruled on similar issues could help lawyers advise clients more realistically – and help litigants decide whether to settle or fight.

AI in native language- English is the language of Indian legal practice, but most litigants do not speak it fluently. Tools that translate legal documents and provide plain-language explanations of judgments in regional languages can make the system meaningfully more accessible.

Better case management for the courts- But simply moving paper processes to the web won't cut it. The next step is to use data to find the bottlenecks – which types of cases take the longest, which stages cause the most delay – and to redesign court processes based on that knowledge.

Blockchain for land records- Property titles are a major source of civil disputes in India, and some states have piloted blockchain land registries in an effort to reduce fraud and litigation.

Writing with AI help- Tools that help draft petitions, replies and even preliminary orders are likely to become common, provided they are built with enough safeguards to keep a human lawyer or judge firmly in control of the final output.

Laws regulating AI itself- With these tools being integrated in practice, there will be a need for more clarity on questions of accountability, data privacy and unauthorised practice of law, the Bar Council of India and the judiciary are likely to play an increasing role in setting guardrails.

Challenges that Remain

The adoption of technology in Indian courts and law firms does not happen in isolation. There are some real barriers:

Infrastructure gaps- Not every court, especially of the district and taluka level, has good internet or hardware.

Resistance to change- A precedent based profession may be wary of new tools, especially when errors could cost someone their liberty or livelihood.

Data privacy and security- Legal documents are inherently sensitive and must be strongly protected from breaches and misuse.

The gap in access to justice- If the new tools mainly benefit large firms and well-resourced litigants at the expense of ordinary citizens, technology can just as easily widen inequality as narrow it.

Trust in AI-created work- The risk that AI tools may generate inaccurate or fabricated citations is well-known, so courts and bar bodies will have to require careful human verification of any AI-assisted legal work.

Conclusion

The future of legal technology in India is not about replacing lawyers or judges. It's about empowering an overburdened system to work faster, reach further, and serve people previously shut out of it by cost, distance or complexity. The building blocks are there: digitised records, improving digital literacy, a large and skilled tech workforce and a judiciary that has shown it can adapt under pressure. The real test in the next decade is whether these tools actually deliver better access to justice for the average citizen, not just efficiency for those who can already afford good lawyers. If India can get that balance right, legal technology could be one of the most consequential reforms to the country's justice system in decades.

