

**Right to Information: Strengthen Indian Democracy**

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**Abstract:**

RTI Act,2005 came into effect on 12<sup>th</sup>October,2005.It brought greater transparency, Responsibility and Accountability in Indian administration. It made the administration more efficient and people friendly. People became more empowered and aware about government functioning through access government records and documents. We are celebrating the 75th anniversary of India's independence, it is a necessary for us to reimagine the right to information that will strengthen Indian democracy and will ultimately empower ordinary citizens. It is heartening to know that over 4,800 RTI applications are filed on an average every day and in the first ten years of the commencement of the RTI Act, over 17,500,000 had been filed. It is greatly showing that the people are connecting with the administration and getting their required information. It is also straightening the grass roots level because through RTI Act people are awaking about various policies and programmes.

Keywords: RTI (Right to Information), Democracy, Citizen, Administration

**Introduction:** India is the second largest democracy in the world and government is making the various policies and plan for successful democracy. It is providing the basic amenities to their people for strengthening democracy. But the corruption, malpractices, nepotism and red tapism are the such evil, which is hindering the efficiency of the government functioning. Due to that people are depriving from the basic amenities and fundamental rights. This phenomenon had increased the level of poverty, inequality and social justice in the state.

Therefore, to curb these issues from the state, government has introduced the RTI Act in 2005.Although Supreme Court has stated in this regard already in 1975,Justice Mathew in the case of State of Uttar Pradesh v. Raj Narain stated, "In a government of responsibility like ours, where all the agents of the public must be responsible for their conduct, there can be but few secrets. The people of this country have a right to know every public act, everything that is done in a public way by their public functionaries. They are entitled to know the particulars of every public transaction in all its bearing. Their right to know, which is derived from the concept of freedom of speech, though not absolute, is a factor which should make one wary when secrecy is claimed for transactions which can at any rate have no repercussion on public security". Justice Mathew already clear the way of RTI Act and also defined the significance of this act for masses. The Indian Constitution also made the

provision for RTI Act in Article 19 (A). It revealed that it was need of the time but it was enforced on 12 October,2005 in all over India except Jammu and Kashmir.

Right to Information Meaning: When the public can have the access to government records and documents. In this regard our former vice president of India Sh. Hamid Ansari also stated, “Democracy requires an informed citizenry and transparency of information which are vital to its functioning and also to contain corruption and to hold Governments and their instrumentalities accountable to the governed.”

### **RTI Act and Common Masses**

The central objective of right to information legislation is to bring about a structural change in the approach to governance and in relations between government and the people. It is important not to underestimate the paradigmatic significance of this change. In most countries, and India is no exception, implementation of the right to information is the first real opportunity for citizens to engage in direct, horizontal, demand-driven accountability from government. On 12th October 2021, India marked the 16th anniversary of the commencement of the Right to Information Act 2005, which first came into effect on 12th October 2005. The history, evolution, and the journey of the right to information (RTI) movement in India is truly inspiring, especially when we recognize the fact that its origins were part of a grass-roots initiative. In the last 16 years RTI performance is remarkable, it put the milestone and brought the greater transparency in administrative functioning. It is heartening to know that over 4800 RTI applications are filed on an average everyday and in the first ten years of the commencement of RTI Act over 17,500,000 had been filed. This is probably a good time to reflect on the importance of the Right to Information for strengthening our democracy. It is showing great access of the masses towards administration. It is also a good sign that if Public Information Officer is unable to furnish information in stipulated time of period i.e., 30 days also penalized by appellate authority or SIC/CICs. It makes administration more responsible and accountable. The various scam was accrued in India i.e., 2G spectrum sale, Commonwealth Games 2008 and 2017 demonetization without approval of Reserve Bank of India to overcoming more everyday instances of governmental corruption and lethargy for not disbursing public funds under pension and insurance schemes, the Right to Information (RTI) has played a vital role in increasing transparency and accountability for citizens.

### **Main Provisions of RTI Act**

In the RTI Act,2005 some main provisions have made for delivering services.

- Any Indian citizen can apply for RTI, on simple paper or even orally apply
- In each department either centre or state a Public Information officer is designated for supplying information

- While applying a specified amount to be paid i.e., 50 for Centre government and 10 rupees for state of Haryana
- Supply for Information in Normal course 30 days
- If application is given to APIO, time period will be added more 5 days (35 days)
- No fee shall be taken from Below Poverty Line
- If information is concerned with life and liberty, time 48 hours
- If APIO or PIO is unable to furnish information within stipulated time period i.e., 30/35 days, he/she have to pay fine i.e., 250/- rupees per day and up to 25000/-

Hence, the act is empowered to every Indian citizen that She/he can seek the information from any department except information related to safety and security of India.

### **Problem before effective Implantation**

There are various reasons due that RTI Act is not implementing effectively. They are following:

- In July, 2019 government has passed an amendment and reduced the independence of CIC.
- Poor Record Management System
- Untrained Central Public Information Officer or State Public Information officer
- Delays in disposal of appeals and complaints
- Poor awareness of People
- Huge Backlogs
- Poor Quality of Information Provided

These are some common issues due that information seeker is not able to get requisite information within stipulated time period resulting improper implementation of RTI Act

### **Recommendation for Effective implementation**

It is required in democratic fabric, administration should be easily access able for masses.

Therefore, some recommendations have been made.

- RTI replies should be uploaded on departmental website
- Amendment on section 6 (2) of RTI Act related to prevention of misuse RTI
- Adequate infrastructure should be set up in each department
- Appropriate training should be given to Public Information officer
- Awareness campaign should be launched through Radio, Television and Media
- Department should be maintained on soft copies for easily disseminating
- Budget should be allocated for RTI in every department separately

## **Conclusions**

Right to Information Act is to empower the citizens, promote transparency and accountability in the working of the Government, and make our democracy work for the people in real sense. It goes without saying that an informed citizen is better equipped to keep necessary vigil on the instruments of governance and make the government more accountable to the governed. The Act is a big step towards making the citizens informed about the activities of the Government. RTI Act has opened or explores new ways for the working of institutions and governance. But there are some deficiencies in the system due to which the RTI Act is not properly implementing like Poor record management, misuse, untrained PIOs, low public awareness, which obstruct the national development and integration, or to destroy the peace, tranquillity and harmony among its citizens. Demanding impractical and unrelated or unnecessary information affects the efficiency of the department and also increases the unproductive burden on the commission. Therefore, the issues and constraints can be solved by taking some proper and important steps like giving training to the CPIO and PIO, uploading the documents on departmental website, increasing the number of information commissioners, compiling of some RTI applications, publication of RTI ACT in regional languages, making RTI Act a compulsory subject in schools. By using all these tools, we can solve or tackle the issues and constraints in the implementation of the RTI Act and implement this Act in a better way for good governance which promotes openness, transparency, and accountability in the public administration.

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