

# Right to Information at a Glance

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**Abstract:** - Information is an essential tool for the development of any society. It acts as a bridge between the sender and the receiver and connects the whole world out of a large diaspora into one cluster. It has played a key role in the evolution of human civilisation and can be rightly termed as a paradigm of 'participatory democracy'. It is a basic need of all human being without which the network of communication cannot be comprehensive. With the expansion in the channel of communication, the influx of information has gathered tremendous pace with a global outreach and brought revolutionary change among the target audience which can be described as the dawn of a new era. With the advent of 21<sup>st</sup> century and the invasion of digital era that overwhelmed the mankind with its omnipresence, promulgation of information from all sources became the need of the hour. But with the advent of new opportunities, it has certainly raised many challenges as well. To ensure precise & meticulous flow of information for the fulfilment of its objective of an informed citizenry and also to bring about accountability & transparency in the system of administration and with an aim to mitigate the menace of corruption, the Right to Information (RTI) Act came into force in 2005.

**Key Words:** Information, State, Development, Society

## I. INTRODUCTION

Information is a key element of understanding without which no person irrespective of caste, creed, religion, etc can prosper. Proper dissemination of information ensure a better and a developed society. At the same time distorted information may create chaos and unrest, thereby posing a threat and jeopardising the upliftment of a civilised world. Besides creating awareness among the masses on various issues of real life importance, propagation of widespread information will also help to curb corruption and bring transparency & accountability. Information is thus an essential component and an indispensable capital for the human genesis.

Considering the importance of this valuable asset, the government laid down the RTI "Right to Information" Act 2005 wherein the Act empowers every citizen to seek information under the ambit of this very act.

On 12<sup>th</sup> October 2005 the RTI Act fully came into force with the sole objective of empowering people, containing corruption and bringing transparency and accountability in the working of the government. Since State is the custodian of bulk of the data and records pertaining to various aspects of working of the administration, organisation, Institutes and other public entities, as such the government functionaries were levied under this act and mandates these government

functionaries to promulgate the information to the citizenry in a time bound manner.

## II. NEED FOR RTI

A nation achieves its greatness from the people it inhibits. It is a well proven hypothesis that an informed citizenry helps to build a developed nation and a civilised society at large. Besides, sharing of information will also help to curb down the menace of corruption in the society and at the same time ensuring to fulfil the objective of attaining transparency & accountability. The paradigm was well laid down by the US and European countries when in 1766 Sweden first enacted the RTI Law followed by US, Norway, France, Netherlands, Denmark, Greece, Austria, Italy and others. These countries saw a gigantic leap in the greater participation of its audience in the socio, political, economic growth which profoundly elevated the all round development of the nation at large. Greatly inspired by the success stories of these nations, India also made a realistic approach in implementing the act for the dissemination of information among the masses with an aim to create an informed and a well equipped citizenry who can be the pillars of development in the all round socio, political, economic spheres and thus the RTI Act was passed by the parliament on 15 June 2005 and came into force on 12 October 2005.

## III. WHY THIS ACT?

Realistically, no authority, State or Central can take this pain to exhibit its structure or functioning to the audience at large, except the stake holders. In absence of the availability of the data, records and other Information, the functioning of any organisation cannot be gauged. Neither the cause of dissemination of information nor the target of curbing corruption and attaining accountability and transparency can be attained. Thus, the foreseeable crux of an informed citizenry for a developed nation will lose its essence in entirety. In order to mitigate such factors that cause an impediment in fulfilling the objectives of good governance, to consolidate the fundamental right in the Indian constitution and also to ensure that the functionaries cooperate with the citizen so that there is no obstacle in the supply of information, this act was enacted and levied upon the agencies.

## IV. ETHICS OF RTI ACT

For successful implementation of any act or policy, there must be a well defined laid down guidelines & principles for the actors to adhere upon and execute accordingly. In order to meet the objectives set out under the ambit of this act, the RTI Act enacted in 2005 has been drafted and formulated with its

provision and clauses well articulated and meticulously chalked out in a succinct manner for the stake holders. The essential features of the RTI Act are enumerated hereunder at a glance:

- 1) RTI is a legal right for every citizen of India. The authorities under RTI Act 2005 are called quasi-judicial authorities.
- 2) Under the provision of this Act, citizens can seek information held by the agency by paying requisite fee and the concerned agency has to furnish the desired information within a specific period of time.
- 3) The information seeker does not require citing any reason for seeking the information.
- 4) Agencies should suo motu disclose certain information of public importance in the domain which are easily accessible to the public.
- 5) Certain categories of information are exempted from disclosure under the provision of this act.
- 6) There are also certain organisations which are exempted from disclosure of information.
- 7) In case the information is not supplied within the stipulated time or there is denial of information or the information seeker is not satisfied with the information supplied with, he can approach the appropriate appellate authority for the settlement of his appeal.

#### V. THE PROS AND CONS OF THE ACT

The RTI Act is an effective tool of supply of information. Undoubtedly, the act has come as a dawn of a new era with numerous advantages but ever since its implementation certain drawbacks have also been come into fore. The pros and cons of this act have been outlined hereunder.

##### *Merits of the Act*

- a) It ensures better & effective communication between the information provider and the seeker thereby escalating the level of awareness of the citizens and helping them in becoming an informed citizenry.
- b) It acts as a vigil, keeping an eye on the functions of the agencies and thus promotes the phenomenon of transparency in the activities of the functionaries.
- c) Since the act emphasises on accountability and transparency, it plays the vital role of a catalyst in eradicating or mitigating the menace of corruption in the society.
- d) The efflux of this entire paradigm gives an impetus to the objective of attaining good governance in the digital era.

##### *Drawbacks of the Act*

- a) In many instances it has been found that repeated & frivolous RTI applications are being filed in the garb of seeking information thereby adversely affecting the working of the agencies.

- b) The act has been used as a tool of vendetta in some circumstances thus disrupting the functioning of the organisation & diverting the resources.
- c) In case of furnishing of misinformation or misleading or incorrect information, the public lose faith in the functioning of the organisation. It therefore endangers the principle objective of the act.
- d) In absence of a proper monitoring process or an absolute mechanism for the evaluation and assessment of this exercise to ensure that information has been widely disseminated in letter & spirit, the agencies responsible for executing this phenomenon do not take appropriate steps & show lenient approach in its compliance.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

The Right to Information Act has supposedly given the right to the people of this country to access information & peep into the store house of the public authorities. It has undoubtedly guided the nation in achieving its objective of creating an equipped and a well informed citizenry who can take the nation ahead in the path of righteousness safeguarding the democratic values of our Constitution.

In a nutshell, the RTI Act has a wide spread impact on the masses and also commensurate the objectives and principles set out for the all-round development of the nation at large. The hypothesis of creating an informed citizenry by the mechanism of dissemination of information at large scale is well meted out with the promulgation of this act. Needless to say, it has arouse a sense of responsibility among the information seeker and the information giver in terms of the significance of this act, and at the same time it has also worked as a whistle blower in alarming the public authorities in terms of accountability and transparency in the functioning of the organisation. The act has definitely ushered a new role in the digital aeon of this 21<sup>st</sup> century to create an informed citizenry for the well being & upliftment of human civilisation and also acted upon aptly as a subtle workforce in curbing the menace of corruption in the society thereby playing the role of an aesthetic architect in overall development of the nation.

#### REFERENCES

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