

# Right to information act in indian democracy

[Politics](#), [Democracy](#)



In modern constitutional democracies, it is axiomatic that citizens have a right to know about the affairs of the Government which, having been elected by them, seeks to formulate sound policies of governance aimed at their welfare. The ideals of modern democracy are built up on the principle that freedom of speech and expression is necessary, for self expression which is an important means of free conscience and self fulfillment. It enables people to contribute to debates of social and moral issues. It is the best way to find a truest model of anything, since it is only through it, that the widest possible range of ideas can circulate.

It is the only vehicle of political discourse so essential to democracy and the largest democratic country, India, stands 55th in the list of 68 countries in the enactment of Right to Information. In order to promote transparency and accountability in administration, the Indian Parliament enacted the Freedom of Information Act, 2002, which was repealed later and a new act, the Right to Information Act (RTI) came into force on 12 October 2005. The new law empowers Indian citizens to seek information from a public authority, thus making the Government and its functionaries more accountable and responsible. As our former PM Atal Behari Vajpayee had said, " The Government wants to share power with the humblest; it wants to empower the weakest. " It is precisely because of this reason that the RTI has to be ensured for all. It is a matter of pride that we have given to ourselves a tool which has the potential to usher in transparency and reduce corruption . Information is indispensable for the functioning of a true democracy.

People have to be kept informed about current affairs and broad issues- political, financial, social and economic. Soli Sorabjee stressing on the need of RTI aim at bringing transparency in administration and public life, says, " Lack of transparency was one of the main causes for all pervading corruption and RTI would lead to openness, accountability and integrity. " More important than the issue of corruption, each and every one of us being the citizens of a democratic country like India are the unlabeled rulers of our country. We elect our representatives to do our part and so every citizen has the right to be informed of what happens in his country except some information that has confidential nature. RTI is critical for the existence of democracy. Only with the right information, we can work in the right way. With the information, people can fight corruption, they can expose corruption, they can check whether the governmental strategies are aiming the right way, they can engage in democracy.

We just get informaton initially and after that we have to participate in governance. Until the implementation of RTI, democracy used to be from election to election that goes for five years. Now we can go out and say that we want to participate in the governance. It has been highlighted in various reports through many case studies that RTI has adequate " teeth" to bring in transparency and reduce corruption. But the case studies accept the fact that the Act has not yet reached the stage of implementation which was envisioned. The Government/Public Authority machinery was not found well-equipped to respond to the needs of the RTI. There is a serious failure in record management (where there is delay in processing and the PIOs not being aware of record management guidelines).

There is also lack of training /knowledge and the usage of information technology is very less. Most of the PIOs have taken up the role unwillingly leading to low motivation among them. A separate study is recommended to improve the current record management systems and make them " RTI friendly". In order to ensure good performance of PIOs in implementing the Right to Information Act, allocation of responsibility of PIOs and AAs to senior level officials in a Public Authority is required. Also, mass awareness campaigns may be conducted to increase public knowledge and awareness. This may also help to encourage citizen involvement and debates. Awareness could be created within the authority by putting displays.

A conducive and facilitative environment at Government offices is a necessary condition to ensure that citizens are able to apply and receive information in a convenient manner. If all these flaws and inadequacies in the implementation of the law are rectified, the Act can definitely become a wonderful ' democratic tool' which can help people well informed, be aware of the way our country is progressing, take part in democracy and have a transparent society.