

## **Citizen Awareness and Utilization of the RTI Act, 2005: A Sociological Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005 offers an extremely important service by opening the democratic governance system of India and ensuring transparency and accountability in it. With this access of information held by the government granted to citizens, the RTI Act is supposed to empower the people, bring transparency and fight against corruption. This paper discusses the implications on RTI Act and looks at how the citizens have used the act especially in their awareness, accessibility, and difficulty. The paper uses an extensive analytical approach of addressing the role of RTI Act on promoting citizen participation in governance, and strengthening democratic empowerment and good governance. The research paper has also pointed out the obstacles to efficient use such as bureaucracy, legal inconveniences and persecution of RTI activists. This paper, through consideration of different case studies, outlines successful, restrictive and sociological consequences of the RTI Act upon the Indian society and the marginalized communities in particular. It ends up quitting some of the improvements that can be made to make the Act and government more effective and boost citizens involvement in the government as well as make the government more transparent.

**Keywords:** Right to Information, Transparency, Accountability, Good Governance, Citizen Empowerment, Bureaucratic Hurdles, Social Activism,

## 1. Introduction

Government of India passed the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005 which was aimed at supporting the growing pressure towards transparency and accountability in the life of the people. It causes the strong sense of power as it gives citizens the legal right to discover all kinds of information that is in the possession of any kind of authority. This is a tool of legislation that supporters the right of people to inquire about different issues relating to the operation of the government, the decisions made by the administration, and the practices of implementing different policies, which, in this way, makes the system of governance more transparent and open to everyone [1]. The RTI Act can be considered as one of the most progressive legislations in India and this has brought in sea of change in making this society more democratic. The Act also helps, through the involvement of citizens in governance, be an agent of accountability as there would be a system that would eliminate corruption and enhance efficiency in the operation of the state. It gives citizens the right to challenge the government decisions as well as their actions so that officials are more responsible as regards their actions and the institutions become responsive to the people. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the RTI Act has become a breakthrough to achieve good governance, its execution is challenged by a variety of obstacles [2]. The biggest challenge is the less information on the Act and its provisions especially in the rural and less literate society. Even after the civil society has taken steps to create awareness of the right to access information, most of the citizens are unable to know about their right. Besides, bureaucratic opposition in the government departments and the complicated legal procedures involved are some of the discouraging features that do not allow people to make good use of the Act.

In this paper, the coverage also aims to find out the sociological implication of the RTI Act in terms of how the citizens are interacting with the law; the difficulties that the people are experiencing in accessing the law and how it is shaping the governance and democracy in India. Based on the examination of such aspects, the paper will endeavor to bring out the possibilities that the RTI Act can serve as an instrument of social empowerment besides discussing the

obstacles that limit its optimal application. The paper will analyse how the marginalized groups which include people in the rural setting, women and the Dalits are specifically vulnerable to these challenges and how the Act can be revised to better fulfill the greater good of the people. In sociological perspective, this paper will provide insight into the ways whereby the RTI Act can bring about social change to the world through the involvement of the citizens in the political and administrative system and thus a culture of accountability and transparency is enhanced.

## **2. Overview of the RTI Act, 2005**

### **Key Features and Objectives of the RTI Act**

Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005 is the milestone legislative Act in India that essentially transforms the connection between the government and people. The RTI Act is an attempt to make the government more transparent and responsible and the purpose of this Act is achieved by enabling the citizens to demand information possessed by the government authorities. The goals of the Act are simple, though deep-going: to increase the transparency, to stimulate active citizen engagement, to decrease corruption, and, finally, to make the democratic system even stronger. The major provisions and characteristics of RTI Act are given below which make RTI an effective instrument of empowering the people:

#### **1. Right to Access to Information**

The access to information is one of the most essential characteristics of the RTI Act. In terms of this Act, every citizen may ask questions to the authorities of the administration around the issues connected with the governance, the policies, administrative resolutions, and governmental programs. The Act protects the interests of every level of the government including the central government, including the state and local governments, therefore the people have access to information relating to how the government bodies operate. The only justification to such right is information that pertains to issues on national security, privacy of individuals and other exempt subjects which are categorically established in the Act [4].

This right breaks all the power balance, which permits the people not only to have a look at the government policies but also to appropriately interrogate them. It helps the citizens to get hold of information that has been made inaccessible before, thus this serves as a check to arbitrary power, inefficiency and corruption.

## **2. Time-Bound Responses**

The other important aspect of RTI Act is the time bound response it demands. The law requires that all our public authorities must answer an RTI request within a period of 30 days after the application has been received. When faced by urgency like the cases which touch on the life or liberty of a person, the Act makes sure that a response is made within 48 hours. Such a provision keeps the government liable and the requests of the citizens will not be stalled unnecessarily as the section is an order of the day within the bureaucratic system of India [5].

The grave period set on responses will prevent the government departments from withholding responses forever and the citizens will have the authority to seek information in a reasonable period. Penalty in the form of fine can be imposed on the concerned official in cases of non-compliance and this provides an incentive to the concerned person to act at the earliest stage which will minimize bureaucratic delays.

## **3. Sanctions and Punishment**

RTI Act allows the jab when an appeal ought to be given whenever a public authority denies the request of providing information either within the set time or unnecessarily. In lieu of the aforesaid, the citizens are also entitled to appeal to a superior level in the same or the same authority and where need be the citizens can also be available to appear before the Central Information Commission (CIC) or the State Information Commission towards further seeking of recompense.

There are penalties also taken by the law against the public officials who block the RTI process.

An example is that the officials can be fined when they delay unnecessarily, when they give out

incorrect or partially incorrect information, or they fail to give out the requested information. These guidelines hold not only the government but individual government officers who are in charge of disclosure of information to the masses [6].

In this regard, RTI Act provides a fair ground in which not only are the public officials invited to respond promptly and openly but they are also bound to do so through the provision of the act. It is a milestone towards getting rid of corruption as well as inefficiency among government departments.

#### **4. The Openness of Decision-making Processes**

One of the fundamentals of the RTI Act is that of enhancing transparency in decision making among government authorities. There are specific classes of information that the public authorities need to publicly disclose without any formal request. This contains information about government schemes, release of public funds and logic of decision making. The provision also makes the citizens aware of how the government operates and so able to question decisions that are made by public authorities [7].

The level of transparency in the decision-making process enables the citizens to demand and evaluate the governmental activities, in addition to increasing the level of trust in the governmental institutions by the citizens. Through enlightenment, people are able to question, therefore holding their elected representatives and government officials accountable over the decisions they take and the policies they adopt and as a result enhance democracy.

#### **Historical Context and Introduction of the RTI Act**

RTI Act became a reality in India following the increasing demands on the civil society to have reformed government accountability and better involvement of the citizen in the issue of governance. Over the time, different movements on the grass roots, social activists as well as organizations have fought the issue of transparency deficit in government operation and the role it plays in corruption and inefficiency in the government administration. The fight to get a law of

freedom of information was escalated in the late 1990s following the success of the same law in other countries, especially in Sweden, Finland, and the United States.

Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) in Rajasthan was one of the most important occurrences in the campaign of the RTI. The Peasant workers equipped with scale of consciousness and mobilization skills, through the MKSS, which was a grassroots organization, campaigned and demanded records of government spending on their rural development projects. The situation made the system exploit the funds and accountability [8]. The actions of the grassroots movements provided the political strength that was necessary to argue toward a national transparency law. Another landmark in the history of the struggle on the peoples right to information, and which also happened to be a better organized system compared to the above method, was the year 2002 when a national and extensive campaign for the peoples right to information (NCPRI) put pressure on the government to force through the act on the right to information or RTI act. In October 2005 the Act was enacted and this was an important step towards the people demanding accountability of their government. The Act gave a platform whereby citizens had the option to request access to information in the government and the government became less prone to corruption and became more transparent.

Although the RTI Act has enabled the citizens to demand information, it has the problem of challenges especially in paradigm implementation. Whereas, in the past various government institutions could not be questioned, the situation had changed with these institutions being forced to accommodate the law regarding making information accessible. To most officials in the government, RTI Act was a major disruption in the traditional culture regarding existence of bureaucratic opacity. Nonetheless, the Act has generally been seen as successful as it has resulted in increased participation of citizens in the political process and more importantly, has led to achievement of a more accountable government.



## **Role of RTI in Holding Public Authorities Accountable**

RTI Act is an effective instrument to make the public authority responsible in terms of action, policy and decision made by them. The outcome of a viable democracy is that the government officers and government units are accountable to the populace which they represent. The RTI Act speeds this up by providing the citizens with a right to such information as the operation of different departments of the government and other authorities.

In practice the RTI Act is important since it enables the government entities to justify a particular policy to explain what they have done and to give details of their choices. The RTI Act curtails the concepts of transparency and accountability by making government officials give details of decisions regarding the amounts of money it utilizes, development projects and plans of action [9].

The Act also gives the ordinary citizen, the civil society roles, and the media the powers to hold the government and its officials to accounts by asking questions, monitoring the status of various projects, and evaluating the efficiency of the government programs. It is not only limited to the detection of the failures of governance but also gives an incentive to the government to make sound decisions on the basis of the responses and reviews of masses. Consequently, the RTI Act enhances a more accountable and responsible government since the information cannot be readily avoided as the government would easily do in the absence of RTI Act. In one such case, one can find some journalists and activists who tend to extract information about government expenditure, welfare programs, corruption, and services using the RTI Act. The Act is also used by media houses daily to investigate governmental expenditure, which others inefficiencies or mismanagement. In most instances, the Act has assisted in the unearthing of corruption where officials have been made accountable to face a case or even create reforms. Also, the empowerment of citizens by the RTI Act results in their high participation in the governance. The moment they seek knowledge of the government policies or schemes, they get more aware and

active in the democratic process. It enhances the leadership of democracy within a nation and promotes citizen leadership.

The RTI Act is one of the pillars in making good governance, transparency, and accountability. It gives the citizen a chance to claim his rights, takes part in the political process and hold the government responsible in what it does. Nevertheless, difficulties in the implementation cannot be ignored, and the RTI Act is still one of the most valuable legislative means of deepening the Indian democracy and creating the more open and transparent state.

### **3. Awareness of the RTI Act**

#### **Public Awareness of the RTI Act**

Notwithstanding the legal provisions as presented in the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, there is still a big gap in the availability of knowledge among various segments of the population on how it can foster openness and good governance. The law which was drafted to give power to the people by taxing them with the right to get information on the part of the authorities has actually brought in the increased use of RTI in towns and cities. Nonetheless, the big problem that still exists is to make sure that not only citizens in general but citizens living in rural communities are aware of their rights and understand how to utilize the best out of the Act. The RTI Act has been taken up relatively successfully in the urban centers where the access to information and communication technologies is usually good. People in these regions have begun using RTI to challenge the policies of the government, detect corruption and seek accountability [10]. In this regard, public awareness messages, the media, and civil society organizations have striven to disseminate information on the need to have transparency in governance and how to go about seeking information.

Nevertheless, in spite of such efforts, the rural India is in a very poor condition. The citizens in the rural areas are still unaware of the RTI Act and its provisions in most locations. The areas lack literacy and access to technology and this makes it hard to take full advantage of the law.



People in such communities are usually not informed about the Act in an effective way, and in cases where they are, the highly technical process of doing it may prove to be a barrier. As an illustration, many citizens are illiterate and are unable to complete the forms necessary to make an RTI request and lack of language may further add to the problem. Unless citizens are aware on that matter, chances are that they even lack awareness of their right that enables them to demand information, or lost in the meaning of information, they may access. Also, willingness of people to participate in government processes is affected by social traditions and cultural barriers in most areas. Patronage systems and informal power relationships tend to deter people in rural communities who may like to question authority and demand transparency. The fact that question marks about government functioning may be called rebellious or disrespectful by people in such communities deteriorates the readiness to resort to the RTI Act even more.

### **Efforts by Government and Civil Society**

Not only the Indian government, but also several civil society organizations (CSOs) have been involved in trying to sensitize people on the issue of RTI Act. The government has initiated the creation of awareness about the same via the ministry of personnel that controls the RTI Act. The provision of such initiatives implies handing out pamphlets, the publication of information on government websites, and holding workshops to inform the citizens of their rights. Besides, Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) has been in a key position to highlight RTI Act, not only at national level, but also conducting outreach programs. The spread of the information about the RTI Act has also been facilitated by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social activists and advocacy groups. These are organizations which tend to liaise with local governments to carry out trainings, workshops and even create community based campaigns to educate the masses especially in the rural and underserved areas. NGOs have also played a major role in guiding people to file RTI requests and in guiding these people through the process of filing the RTI application and learning the vulnerabilities of acquiring government information [11].

An example is that of the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) which is a grassroots movement and which has utilized the RTI Act to enhance transparency in government welfare schemes more so in the rural set up. MKSS also assisted the rural masses to make RTI applications revealing information regarding the government expenditure and implementation of the programs that has resulted in better accountability of the local government. Although this was done, success of these campaigns has been varied and both the urban and the rural centers have faced their problems. In cities, where RTI Act is more often known, yet the law is not actively used by many citizens either because of the bureaucratic obstacles or because of inability to find time. Most people at the rural level still have no information about what the Act covers despite NGOs and the local governments targeting those places. Several members of the marginalized sections of the society such as women, communities of lower status, and tribal communities are still subject to structural challenges to access and utilization of the RTI Act effectively. Moreover, even though the RTI Act is having its share of implementation by the government and CSOs, the gaps have been immense. The imbalance in the resources allocation which includes the number of trained individuals to deal with RTI requests is also an existing issue, particularly, on the rural and remote premises. Unless adopted in the exhaustive manner, which incorporates training, and awareness as well as capacity-building is undertaken, the potential of the RTI Act is being underutilized by a large section of the population.

### **Challenges in Making Citizens Aware of Their Rights Under the RTI**

The issues related to the creation of awareness on RTI Act can be associated with a number of systemic and practical problems [12].

1. **Language barrier:** Language barrier is one of the greatest obstacles of awareness in India. Although the RTI Act is given in our Indian languages, most citizens especially the rural population are fighting with technical terms being employed in implementing the Act. Law language legal documents and all forms official use can be scary, and this is frightening mostly to individuals who are not well educated or do not read or write properly.

2.     The bureaucratic resistance: Bureaucratic resistance is one of the main challenges even though the government has been fighting against it through government campaigns. Other government personnel have not yet advanced to information sharing because they fear to be questioned or feel accountable on some inefficient processes. Such opposition together with difficulty of submitting RTI applications keeps away many citizens to exercise their right to information. Slow responsive nature of the public authorities as well as uncooperative nature of the authorities create further distance between the citizens in engaging the Act.

3.     Technology Access: The other element that has a main role to play in awareness is digital literacy. In the era of digital technology we see introduction of online websites where RTI applications can be filled in, however those who cannot access computers and internet facilities live in rural parts. Internet penetration is also a challenge to economically less privileged population even in the urban areas and therefore restricts their capacity to make RTIs through internet and leads to more dependency on physical forms that is time consuming.

4.     Misinformation: The extent of RTI Act may also be lost on many people and some citizens may also be misled about the exclusions or steps of the RTI Act. Moreover, in the communities, many rumors or myths about the Act can be heard, and this may cause the citizens not to use the Act. Therefore, the latter can take the feeling that it is not worthy trying it, or that it is too complex to study.

5.     Cultural and Social Barriers: Culture in certain societies, especially in rural areas of India makes people opposed to seeking information with the government. The population can have a view that it is offending the official to ask the question concerning the government and its agents, or he/she can be reluctant to use official structures because he/she is afraid of being an outcast, or marked with a stigma.

RTI awareness plays a pivotal role in the implementation success of the RTI Act yet much of the awareness has a long way to go, especially in the rural and marginalized society. There are various challenges and causes of such poor implementation which include illiteracy, language

difference, bureaucracy and access to technology despite the efforts that government and civil society have made to ensure that the adoption of the Act is geared. In order to maximize the benefits of RTI act full awareness campaigns should be carried out and government staff to be trained and more people must be made able to access the information particularly in rural area. With addressing these issues, RTI Act can indeed be a good tool delivering higher levels of transparency and accountability in the functioning of democracy allowing its people to assume active part in democratically run institutions.

#### **4. Utilization of RTI**

##### **Filing RTI Applications: The Process and Accessibility**

The procedure of a Right to Information (RTI) application is not very complicated, though it still undergoes many bureaucratic overcomplications which prevent many people to use the Act. The first thing to do so as to submit an RTI request is to identify the Public Information Officer (PIO) in the concerned public authority. An official nominated to address the RTI requests is called a PIO, and every public authority must designate one. The citizen should submit a formal application including in the application the information he or she wants. The application has to be made in person to the PIO, either by post or by making it available in online portals in some instances [13]. The Act requires the responsible authorities to give a response within a short time possible, preferably, within 30 days after receiving the application form. In any case, the time of response is cut down to 48 hours in the case of the information sought being related to life and liberty. In case of refusal, citizens can make an appeal and in case of delay or any failure to comply, people can impose punishment on the authorities concerned.

E-filing and websites have also been opened in some states and at the central level so that the process of filling RTI can be easier especially, to those who are well conversant with the online areas. This has been useful to the urbanites and the techno geeks. Nevertheless these problems still exist when it comes to rural population and the technology illiteracy. In spite of such online systems, the process of applying under RTI necessitates bureaucratic procedures which could be

a frightening experience to people who are not conversant with the system. It may also include cases of unhelpful officials, delays, or rejections to give information or provide it in a way customers may process, or use. These factors have fostered the failure to harness the RTI Act, particularly in the remote regions where the knowledge about the Act is dismal and where the bureaucratic set ups are enrooted.

### **Common Areas Where RTI Is Used**

Most of the RTI applications are made on a few major front where citizens desire more transparency or in those areas where citizens are unsatisfied as to how the government functions. These include:

1. Government Schemes - There are more instances when citizens want to use RTI to get an idea on how allocation, distribution, and implementation of the public welfare schemes are carried out. This can be in forms of amount spent on such programs such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Midday Meal scheme and other government programs. Because of the benefits associated with it, RTI is now a key instrument in detecting mismanagement or ineffectiveness in administration of government benefits and providing government funds [14].

Take the case of an RTI request that can seek the answers to questions such as how far the amount of money is destined to a rural employment scheme and how actually much of the money spent on the scheme, hence reveal the differences in the allocation and expenditures of the funds.

2. Healthcare - The other industry where application of RTI is frequently filed is in healthcare. Patients usually need the information about the quality of the healthcare services and their availability including government-controlled hospitals. Some of the popular requests are on the number of staff, medicines, bed availability and health project funding. RTI requests are even employed to seek corruption or mismanagement at the healthcare facilities [15].

As an example, an RTI application could request information regarding the number of beds in a government hospital and the actual occupancy rate which will enable it to figure out the infrastructural gap or lack of services.

3. Education - Education is one of the areas where there is need of transparency. The main RTI requests to education are the request of information concerning the admission, the infrastructure facilities and funds given to the public schools. The Act has enabled students, parents and education activists to establish accountability over the state of schools and the provision of education on part of the public authorities [16].

This would happen, as in an instance where the citizens would send in an RTI inquiry to inquire about the expenditure on the construction of school buildings or the amount that would be paid to the teacher which would reveal under-funding or misuse of funds.

4. Public Spending - Among the most common applications of the RTI Act is the transparency of any spending of the state. RTIs are regularly applied by citizens and even activists, to know how the government departments are utilising their public funds. The uses of RTI applications range all the way to government procurement processes to expenditure on infrastructure schemes, considering the fact that citizens can monitor and demand to know how their tax resources are used [17].

By way of example, an RTI request would be made to enquire about the amount of money spent by a state government upon a road construction work and it would require a break-up of the expenditure and the materials, and date. This aids in ensuring that the citizens are getting value of their money and it is not being diverted and abused.

### **Case Studies or Statistics of Successful RTI Applications**

#### **Case Study 1: Mumbai – Public Park Maintenance**



A citizen in Mumbai filed an RTI request to inquire about the amount of money allocated for the maintenance of local public parks. The RTI response revealed that substantial funds meant for park maintenance had been diverted elsewhere, leading to the parks' poor condition. This discrepancy triggered a public outcry, with media coverage amplifying the issue. As a result, the municipal authorities were compelled to reallocate funds for the maintenance of parks, thereby ensuring that public resources were used more effectively. This case demonstrates the power of the RTI Act to uncover corruption and negligence in the management of public resources, leading to direct improvements in public services [18].

### **Case Study 2: Rajasthan – Government School Construction**

In Rajasthan, a group of activists used the RTI Act to request information about the construction quality of government schools. The RTI responses revealed that substandard materials had been used in the construction of many school buildings, raising concerns about the safety and durability of the infrastructure. The revelations prompted legal action and reforms in school-building practices, ensuring that future constructions would be more rigorously monitored. This case highlights how the RTI Act can bring about structural reforms by exposing inefficiencies or malpractices in public sector projects, ultimately benefiting the public and improving governance standards.

The National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI) reports that RTI applications have led to several successful outcomes across the country. According to recent statistics from the Central Information Commission (CIC), more than 5 million RTI applications were filed in 2020 alone. The most common areas of inquiry were related to government schemes, healthcare services, public procurement, and education. These applications have resulted in a significant increase in transparency, with many previously hidden or inaccessible government actions now coming under scrutiny. As a result, the RTI Act continues to serve as an essential mechanism for holding public authorities accountable and ensuring that government operations are transparent and efficient [19].

The utilization of the RTI Act has empowered citizens across India by providing them with the legal framework to demand accountability and transparency in governance. The process for filing RTI applications has been simplified, especially with the advent of online portals, although challenges still remain for citizens in rural areas and those with limited literacy or digital access. Despite these obstacles, the RTI Act has played a pivotal role in areas such as public schemes, healthcare, education, and public spending. Case studies from Mumbai and Rajasthan illustrate the impact of RTI in exposing corruption and mismanagement, leading to reforms and increased public accountability [20]. However, the utilization of the RTI Act is not without challenges, particularly in terms of bureaucratic resistance, legal complexity, and the lack of widespread awareness in certain regions. For the RTI Act to reach its full potential, there needs to be a stronger push for awareness campaigns, capacity-building initiatives, and greater accessibility to information for all sections of society. As the democratic landscape in India continues to evolve, the RTI Act remains a cornerstone of transparency, citizen empowerment, and the drive towards good governance.

## **5. Sociological Impact**

### **RTI in Strengthening Democracy**

The right to information (RTI) Act, 2005 has been very instrumental in enhancing democracy in India. The Act has not only made the citizens powerful, but has also made them more participatory to democratic process. The RTI act enhances transparency and accountability in the government since citizens are given a right to receive information. It creates easier communication between the state and its people which creates confidence in the state institutions. The democratic culture of India has been complemented with the capability of the citizens to demand answers to questions to government that is in the open. It is an active involvement that is essential in a healthy democracy since it enables citizens to ask questions, criticize and seek clarification on government decisions, practices and utilization of state resources. When the citizens start exercising their right of information they cease to be mute ends

of what the government decides, but active instruments of what happens in the reins of governance. RTI Act makes sure that citizens are not to run out of steam to face the bureaucracy. The government information can enhance the citizenry to be better placed to comprehend the policies being made, bug the elected officials as well as have a say in the decision making that directly affects them. The Act promotes the concept of responsive governance whereby the officials should be reminded that they should be answerable to their constituents.

### **Making a Difference in the Marginalized Communities**

One of the best and most positive sociological implications of RTI Act is that it empowers those who are marginalized- a society who have been sidelined as far as decision making is concerned. These include Dalits, women and rural dwellers. Socially and economically these communities have been discriminated, oppressed and also excluded. The RTI Act provides these communities with a means through which they can counter this marginalisation as it provides them the opportunity to get to know about information on issues that are directly related to their welfare like welfare schemes, allocation of resources and where they can get these facilities. To illustrate, India has Dalit communities who have traditionally been not able to access information but they can now access the RTI Act to seek accountability on the government officials. The women in the rural countryside would have the power, to enquire about their rights, entitlements and government programs undertaking to improve the lives of women and thus can claim or demand the services that they should receive using the Act. In rural India, illiteracy and inaccessibility to information has been a deterrent factor to people; the RTI Act can be looked upon as an instrument that allows the marginalized groups to acquire government information on public works, employment schemes and health programs under the public health systems which impact their areas. This Act has helped the marginalized citizens to speak actively on issues of local governance and introduce transparency where it might not have existed before as well as gaining more interest in the democratic process. Be it inquiring on the execution of government schemes such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) or requesting information on

the rights to land or on government expenditure these groups can now keep authorities under check and cut down cases of corruption and exploitation.

### **Reducing Corruption**

This RTI Act is generally supposed to be a strong weapon over the issue of corruption in India. The Act will enable more transparency and in the process reduce chances of abuse of powers and corruption in government offices. It discourages the bad endings of the cases of the public officials who could be inclined to do something unethical or misuse the funds as they understand that their deeds could be investigated by people. When citizens make the RTI requests, they are allowed to inquire on how the governments are making purchases, how they distribute the available resources and how they spend the state finance. Such transparency means that the government officials are bound to be more responsible since they know that what they do may be challenged and subjected to any form of scrutiny. Such openness, in its turn, makes government projects implemented efficiently, ensures proper allocation of resources as well as correct use of money of the people.

Another major illustration is the fact that it is through RTI applications where corruption in public works has been revealed especially in rural India. The RTI requests have revealed inflated budgets and poor quality construction materials and diversion of funds towards road constructions, schools buildings and other infrastructures in the so called public projects. These exposomes have given way to law suits, reforms in policy and the general decline in local corruption. Also, RTI Act is a means of making sure that government officials are not complacent or misuse their powers. Being aware that they are answerable to the people on any decision they make, it is highly likely that the officials will be observed to be careful in the decision-making process they take besides seeing to it that the decisions they make are according to the ethical practices. The Act is more of a key towards breaking the curtain of secrecy in which corruption tendencies tend to flourish so that people cannot conceal their evil deeds. Moreover, RTI movement in India has given rise to awareness of people, which has changed the perception

towards corruption. As there is more information distributed, people are ever intolerant of corruption and they want things to be cleaned up rapidly when corruption or illegal acts have been exposed. Having passed the RTI Act, a culture of accountability has slowly but surely eked out the corruption in the system.

### **Improving Government in Powering Up RTI**

The RTI Act has more sociological ramifications than enabling individuals since its implications are on the whole aspect of governing a society. The Act has enhanced a transparent, accountable, as well as democratic government because, by enabling the citizens to demand as well as receive the information, the Act has provided them with the capability of demanding and receiving information. It has changed the government into an open and transparent system instead of a bureaucratic system. Service delivery has also been advanced due to the increased participation of the citizens in the RTI process. The fact that influential people in the government are now conscious of the fact that their activities are continually being monitored, will result in a surge of interest in delivery of services within reasonable time, input of factual information as well as proper utilization of public funds. Consequently, the citizens enjoy quality governance and they have higher chances of trusting their organizations of government. With the help of RTI-based activism, people have been capable to make the work of communal establishments including schools, medical clinics and government offices more practical, receptive and transparent. It has also improved the credibility and credibility of the public sector which has resulted in more involvement of citizens in the governance processes and making of a decision in the public.

The Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005 has significantly caused a sociological change in Indian society where the people, especially the ones that belong to the marginalized communities within the society, have been empowered to seek accountability of their government. The Act has allowed more openness and less corruption as well as bolstering of democracy through granting access to information by citizens. With RTI, the marginalized groups like Dalits, women, and the rural populace have the means by which activities of the government can be focused in such a

way that they bring benefit to them. The RTI Act has also made society to be more just since it has unraveled abuse of power in the society and that there has been fairer allocation of resources. It has turned the governance into more transparent and accountable system, and formed the basis of more informed and participatory society. RTI movement has helped establish a culture of accountability, enforced the process of democracy and provided good governance.

## **6. Conclusion**

Right to information (RTI) Act, 2005 has become the innovative method of enhancing transparency, accountability and democratic participation in India. It has been a tremendous step towards enlightening the governance arena, as citizens which it has enabled have the right to know those things held by the government, and through that they have improved on their influence and participation. The Act has encouraged the unmasking of inefficiency, corruption and mismanagement in different sectors and there has been more responsiveness to governance. But there is still much potential of the RTI act to be achieved as major bottlenecks such as a general unawareness of the act especially in the rural and marginalized populations, bureaucracy and complicated nature of the legal framework still discourage people to use the act. In actual sense, a way of maximizing the usefulness of the RTI Act is to increase the awareness campaigns, simplify application procedure, and facilitate proper access to technology, especially those in the rural setup. Moreover, it is important to handle the problem of bureaucratic opposition and guarantee full and time response to RTI requests as the means to support the effectiveness of this Act. Since India is still growing up as a democratic country, the RTI Act has to be regularly fortified so that it can truly become a medium of good governance as well so that the citizens of India can influence the state through it and can make it accountable of what it does.



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