

A REPORT ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT, 2005

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ABSTRACT

The Right to Information Act, 2005, is a landmark legislation in the democratic landscape of India, marking a great leap in the perspective of transparency and accountability within public administration. This article reflects on the history and development of the Right to Information. It points out the impact of such an act in bridging the gap between the government and citizens, as such participation by citizens was instrumental in questioning, auditing, and reviewing governmental decisions. In doing so, the Act empowers citizens not only to fight corruption and inefficiencies but also to clean opaque governance practices. The paper would further probe landmark judicial pronouncements that have structured the RTI landscape and take a look at the challenges and setbacks that the RTI movement has faced in the form of harassment and violence against activists. However, the Act still faces such challenges as poor record-keeping, inadequate staffing, and lack of awareness. Quoting the conclusion from the article, "Institutional supports, governance frameworks, and stronger protections for RTI activists would provide a thylacine momentum to renew the initiative and ensure it remains relevant in strengthening democracy in India."

Keywords: *Right to Information, Good Governance, Transparency, Administration, Accountability, Government*

INTRODUCTION

Information is a variant of knowledge, and knowledge is the source of power, which makes the individual powerful and stronger; therefore, information regarding government and administration empowers one to actively participate in good governance, self-sufficiency, and personal development. Democracy involves the actual participation of citizens in public affairs. If a government is democratic, information relating to the official acts and policies of such government should be made available for public scrutiny. Thus, a government should be responsive to the opinion of the people. The Right to Information (hereinafter referred to as RTI) makes it impossible for people not to participate in governance and administration. The RTI enhances transparency and accountability in

all public authorities. In other words, it enables citizens to question, audit, review, scrutinize, and evaluate government actions and decisions so that they can have them made in keeping with the relevant principles of public interest, good governance, and justice.¹⁴⁵³

The Right to Information Act of 2005¹⁴⁵⁴ (hereinafter referred to as the Act) is a landmark law in India, which happens to be one of the most essential, citizen-centric, and reformative pieces of legislation in the country's administrative history. It has affected people and the Indian Administration to work in more transparency by disclosing information relating to the government's rules and regulations and

¹⁴⁵³ "Dharanesh S T, IMPLEMENTATION OF RIGHT TO INFORMATION AND IMPACT ON ADMINISTRATION: A Case Study of Collegiate Education and Revenue Departments in Karnataka . rep."

¹⁴⁵⁴ "The Right to Information Act, 2005, No. 22, Acts of Parliament, 2005 (India)."

its decisions. It is expected that each public authority will preserve all records appropriately indexed and catalogued in a manner and form that shall aid the information right under the act. The Act enables the citizens to effectively respond to administrative corruption, irregularities, and irresponsive attitudes.¹⁴⁵⁵ The main objective of the Act was to make government offices more transparent and accountable. The basic principles of the Act are implemented, and an institutional framework exists and is brought to life by citizens. Many civil organizations and the media are using the Act to advocate principles of transparency and objectivity. The state governments have taken the initiative beyond the Act to do more as it strengthens its spirit and substance.¹⁴⁵⁶

HISTORY AND JUDICIAL TAKE ON THE RTI

It was in Sweden in 1766 when the Freedom of Press Act of 1766¹⁴⁵⁷ began under the law of Rights to Information globally.¹⁴⁵⁸ In the Indian context, it was through Section 76 of the Indian Evidence Act of 1872¹⁴⁵⁹ that a legal provision was made to make public records available, however, for over 150 years, it remained an unimplemented and quite unknown provision. This section provides that any public officer put in charge of a public document shall provide it to such person who so requests it and, upon paying such fees as may be prescribed, furnish a copy to him or her.¹⁴⁶⁰ The Official Secrets Act of 1923¹⁴⁶¹ was enacted during British rule in India. confidential by the government. Neither was it replaced nor amended during the post-independence period, and the government continued withholding vital information from the public.

The judiciary played a crucial role in advancing the RTI in India, which is often considered the

flagship of RTI activism. As early as 1982, the Supreme Court held that the right to information is an inherent part of the right to free speech under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. Thus, secretiveness regarding governmental functioning must be the exception, and transparency is the rule unless required otherwise by the overriding interest of the public. Ironically, the judiciary now acknowledged this constitutional right to information as viable and has always remained dormant, except for occasional bursts of grassroots activism.¹⁴⁶² This was brought to the people's attention in India when the case of State of Uttar Pradesh v. Raj Narain,¹⁴⁶³ in 1975, first came before courts in India. The RTI had been an issue till then, and indeed, by the 1985 case of Indian Express Newspapers v. Union of India,¹⁴⁶⁴ this was confirmed in the Supreme Court with the finding that citizens have the right to be informed about what goes on in the government. Over the years, the Apex Court has made several observations and comments, upholding the right to information in various judgments.

The RTI in India needed a tremendous movement, and such momentum came against it, at least from Rajasthan. Nikhil Dey and Aruna Roy did that for them. Their campaign, "Hamara Paisa, Hamara Hisab," helped fortify the movement.¹⁴⁶⁵ They eventually founded the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, which prompted the government of Rajasthan to enact its Right to Information Act on 26th January 2001.¹⁴⁶⁶ However, Tamil Nadu was the

¹⁴⁵⁵ *supra* note 1.

¹⁴⁵⁶ "Aditya Vikram Yadav, *Improving transparency & accountability in the government through effective implementation of the Right to Information Act*, RIGHT TO INFORMATION (Sept. 26, 2024) https://rti.gov.in/aditya_and_rahul.pdf."

¹⁴⁵⁷ "The Freedom of Press Act, 1766 (Sweden)."

¹⁴⁵⁸ *id.*

¹⁴⁵⁹ "The Indian Evidence Act, 1872, § 76."

¹⁴⁶⁰ *id.*

¹⁴⁶¹ "The Official Secrets Act, 1923, No. 19, 1923 (India)."

¹⁴⁶² "Riegner, M. (2018) *Access to information as a human right and constitutional guarantee. A comparative perspective - nomos eLibrary, VRÜ Verfassung und Recht in Übersee*. Available at: <https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/10.5771/0506-7286-2017-4-332/access-to-information-as-a-human-right-and-constitutional-guarantee-a-comparative-perspective-volume-50-2017-issue-4?page=1> (Accessed: 26 September 2024)."

¹⁴⁶³ "State of Uttar Pradesh v. Raj Narain, AIR 1975 SC 865."

¹⁴⁶⁴ "Indian Express Newspapers v. Union of India, AIR 1986 SC 515."

¹⁴⁶⁵ "Humaara Paisa, Humaara Hisab, Sangharsh Ki Anokhi Dastaan (no date) BBC News. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/hindi/india/2015/05/150430_rti_25_year_of_mks_s_rajasthan_india_rns (Accessed: 27 September 2024)."

¹⁴⁶⁶ *supra* note 1.

first state to enact a Right to Information Act in May 1997.¹⁴⁶⁷

THE WORKING PROCESS

The RTI process requires authorities to proactively disclose information through various forms, including records, documents, emails, circulars, press releases, contracts and electronic data samples. It also allows for the inspection of work, documents, records, and certified copies as well as information stored in electronic formats like diskettes, floppies, tapes, videos, cassettes, or data on computers. Each public and semi-public authority must appoint a Public Information Officer (PIO) and an Assistant PIO to facilitate public access to information. Anyone can submit a written request to the PIO for specific information, which must be provided within a set timeframe.¹⁴⁶⁸

Suppose the PIO fails to respond to the RTI application within the stipulated time period, he is open to a first appeal by the applicant with the First Appellate Authority. The First Appellate Authority is called upon under Section 19(1)¹⁴⁶⁹ to provide the information sought within 30 days, but this is optional on the applicant's part. If the First Appellate Authority fails to furnish the information within the stipulated time, the applicant can again appeal before the Information Commission opposite the PIO. The Information Commission is a quasi-judicial body under the Act. It conducts inquiries similar to those of a civil court. The Commission may enforce a penalty of Rs. 250 per day, extending to Rs. 25,000. The RTI Act establishes a two-tier Commission system at the Central and State levels.¹⁴⁷⁰

¹⁴⁶⁷ “Cbri: Commonwealth human rights initiative. Available at: <https://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/programs/ai/rti/india/states/tamilnadu.htm#:~:text=Tamil%20Nadu%20was%20the%20first,%20notified%20the%20following%20day> (Accessed: 27 September 2024).”

¹⁴⁶⁸ *supra* note 1.

¹⁴⁶⁹ “The Right to Information Act, 2005, § 19(1) No. 22, Acts of Parliament, 2005 (India).”

¹⁴⁷⁰ “Dharanesh S T, *Implementation of Right to Information and Impact on Administration: A Case Study of Collegiate Education and Revenue Departments in Karnataka*. rep.”

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACT

An enlightened citizen of the Republic of India requires clarity on information and compels the government to avoid corruption and account for its acts. Making key information available serves the greater public interest by allowing governments to function better and empower the optimal use of scarce state resources. Mechanisms for putting this in place enabled people to access information, enabling interested parties to get the required details. This is, in a way, strengthening good governance through the RTI.¹⁴⁷¹ This Act gives Indian citizens the right to challenge administrative corruption and mismanagement.¹⁴⁷² It grants every individual the right to access information about governmental and administrative functions, programs, and procedures. In actual democracy, the government is responsible and transparent to the people; therefore, the government is legally bound to give out issued and requested documents, files, and samples on demand. The Official information maintained by public authorities forms the foundation of a strong and efficient representative democracy. Public access to maximum information, with secrecy treated as an exception, enables a nation to thrive as an informed society. As Thomas Jefferson eloquently described, an informed citizenry is the bulwark of a robust democracy. It is vital to recognize information as a basic human right because it will give a significant means of buttressing the system of checks and balances, ensure transparency and openness in governance, and make accountability more profound.¹⁴⁷³ Worldwide, governance advocating freedom of information has increasingly changed its original role from mere criticism against secrecy into an actual device regulating markets and enforcing efficient governing frames that can trigger

¹⁴⁷¹ *supra* note 2.

¹⁴⁷² *supra* note 1.

¹⁴⁷³ “Anshu Jain, *Good Governance and Right to Information*, 54, JOURNAL OF THE INDIAN LAW INSTITUTE, 506-519 (2012).”

economic growth and technological advancements.

In particular, citizens are granted the right to information under this Act to access information whenever required; indeed, it is widely regarded as landmark legislation in the fight against corruption. The Act does this by giving every citizen the power to question the public authorities and critically analyze their actions towards advancing transparency and accountability. With these two main components, transparency and accountability, the Act is indeed confirmed to guarantee good governance. This helps inhibit corrupt practices, as officers think twice before indulging in some malpractices, fearing that the information might leak out. More than that, it makes government institutions accountable to the public and helps conserve constitutional rights. Transparency at any cost is enhanced by providing insight into the functioning of the government, policies, and schemes. The Act bridges the gap between the government and the common people, compelling negligent government offices to rethink their societal roles. It also allows citizens to verify whether the government uses their tax contributions appropriately. In a responsible government such as ours, there should be very few secrets, as public officials must be accountable for their actions. The citizens of this nation have the right to be fully informed about every public act and every activity carried out by public officials in their official capacity. They are entitled to know all the details of every public transaction.¹⁴⁷⁴

The impact of RTI can very well be guided by the following:

Government Accountability and Performance Enrichment: The Act empowers citizens by engrafting into them a RTI. It also mandates every public authority to furnish the justifications for its administrative or quasi-judicial decisions to the concerned parties.

Before the adoption of the Act, it was not easy for ordinary citizens to gather more information about decision-making processes because those decision-making procedures were sometimes viewed as ineffective in their realisation. By keeping the citizens in the dark, the whole process lacked meaningful debate on issues of public concern.

Citizen-Government Cooperation on Action Plans: This section of the Act scaffolds citizen-government cooperation towards implementing welfare policies. Such cooperation is based on the principle that citizens are not only passive recipients of development but also the active doers for which development should be governed. The Act has improved project development results and made them more dynamic in that it allows citizen participation through accessing information and has included affected groups in designing and implementing projects. Non-Governmental Organizations have empowered rural governments' local bodies at the village level by collaborating. This is also proved by the information related to fund allocation under the rural employment guarantee scheme.

Reduction of Corruption in Government Departments: In the lack of transparency and accountability, corrupt practices on the part of government officials are likely to contribute to low investments and more diverting power or misuse of funds for personal gains. The overall environment between the people and the government is mistrustful and undermines democratic governance. Reduction of corruption takes place through developing efficiency in policy-making, service delivery, and administrative decisions through the Act. It ensures that there is a proper selection of government programs to achieve their desired outcomes, efficiently delivering service that suits and incorporates public needs and opinions.

At the moment, the Act has drastically reduced corruption in India over time, according to the Corruption Perception Index. The index is

¹⁴⁷⁴ "State of Uttar Pradesh v. Raj Narain, AIR 1975 SC 865."

provided by “Transparency International”, which ranks and scores levels of corruption in India relative to those in other countries. The Global Transparency publishes the CPI annually, ranking countries based on the perceived level of corruption. The Act is highly important in the fight against irregularities, corruption and misuse of power. This Act is crucial to promote good governance and development. Transparency is paramount; without it, accountability enforcement cannot be made. The Act’s very principle gives maximum importance to maximum disclosure and minimum confidentiality. Its ultimate objective is to transform a culture of secrecy, bureaucratic delays, and detachment that has often marked India’s opaque bureaucracy.

ANALYSIS OF A CASE LAW

CASE: Karnataka Information Commissioner v. State Public Information Officer, 2012

FORUM: Karnataka High Court

CORAM: Hon’ble Mr. Justice G.S. Singhvi and Hon’ble Mr. Justice H.L. Gokhale

In the above-mentioned case, an RTI applicant sought certified copies of documents and guidelines related to the scrutiny and classification of writ petitions and procedures followed by the Karnataka High Court concerning Writ Petition Nos. 26657 of 2004 and 17935 of 2006, for which the PIO declined, saying that the applicant must apply for such information under Karnataka High Court rules.¹⁴⁷⁵ With the fact having been taken up with the State Information Commission, the latter disagreement with the PIO and directed that the information shall be provided under the Act. The PIO contested the order in the Karnataka High Court, filing a petition with the Applicant as the respondent, and the High Court ultimately annulled the Commissions’ order. The decision of the High Court was challenged by the Commission, represented by an Information

Commissioner before the Hon’ble Supreme Court. The Supreme Court criticized the Information Commissioner for filing the petition. It held that neither the Commission nor the Commissioner had the standing to file such an appeal and even reprimanded them for misusing public funds. Consequently, the Court ordered a penalty of Rs 1,00,000 against the Commission for taking up the issue.

However, in analyzing the case, the judgment of the Supreme Court in this case raises questions because the Court itself has, in its earlier judgments, accepted the Chief Information Commissioner, Manipur, as a petitioner in a different case. Moreover, several High Courts regularly list the Commission as a party in petitions challenging the decisions of Information Commissions. Thus, the objection raised by the Supreme Court to the Commission approaching it as a petitioner seems inconsistent.

The Court, in this way, completely ignored the actual issue that had to be dealt with relating to Section 22¹⁴⁷⁶ of the Act, which imparts an overriding effect to the Act. The provision clearly states that the Act shall have an effect to override any other laws including the Official Secrets Act, 1923,¹⁴⁷⁷ or any other rules and laws in force as the case may be, in terms of providing information. This non-obstante clause was incorporated in the Act to prevent such public authorities from sabotaging the RTI through its own interpretation of other laws. In its judgment, the Supreme Court circumvented this provision and, therefore, undercut the supremacy of the Act, delegating the authority to the public authorities and denying access to information under the pretext of some other rules. Such stiff rebuke by the Supreme Court is a deterrent for Information Commissions to challenge the judiciary. Therefore, in that regard, they become docile. When such strict views are observed from the highest court of

¹⁴⁷⁵ “Supreme Court of India - Rajasthan state ... Available at: https://ric.rajasthan.gov.in/includes/SupremeCourt_2013.pdf (Accessed: 28 September 2024).”

¹⁴⁷⁶ “The Right to Information Act, 2005, § 22, No. 22, Acts of Parliament, 2005 (India).”

¹⁴⁷⁷ *supra* note 9.

the land upon the statutory authorities, credibility of the statutory authority gets severely battered and their ability to enforce law gets diluted. Further, this judgment seems contrary to its own judgments in the *CBSE v. Aditya Bandopadhyay*¹⁴⁷⁸ case, which it had held that Section 22 of the Act overrides conflicting rules of examining bodies on issues of disclosure. Not attempting to address Section 22 properly in the Karnataka Commission case has dissolved the actual intent of that provision and set a precedent to actually dampen the flow of information—precisely what the Act aimed to achieve.

CHALLENGES

Social change has always created fear in the rich. Now, the RTI is slowly but surely moving forward. The ones who have been enjoying the old system have been trying to discredit this act since its birth. Some attitudes among the information commissioner have also raised the apprehension of breaking this legislation into fragments. When the Act was established, the RTI officers and activists faced several harassment and victimization cases. On the one hand, citizens can seek information from the Indian bureaucracy. Still, government offices seriously lack adequate protection and proper record-keeping. The number of staff available is far too meagre to make the RTI system work effectively, and those earmarked as RTI officers often have to put up with the routine departmental duties on their shoulders. Thus, applicants get confused about receiving the information solicited within the stipulated period of 30 days. In addition to the above, the Official Secrets Act¹⁴⁷⁹ is a tremendous hurdle in making all kinds of information available. Persecution against RTI workers does not seem to abate; neither the Central Information Commission nor central and state governments can ensure proper protection; most of them fail to protect against harassment. There is no

defined policy or rule for this protection. Despite waiting for months, the requested information is still inaccessible, incomplete, or misleading. If the applicant is courageous enough to approach the Information Commission, many commissioners often fail to take action against the administration.

Increasing attacks on RTI activists should not deter those who are committed to fighting corruption and malpractices within the public administration system. The latest in the line of what now begins to seem an up-and-coming wave of murder and mayhem, shocking in its brutal style, is the killing of Amit Jethwa by unidentified assailants near the Gujarat High Court in Ahmedabad. An advocate against illegal mining in the Gir forests, his death falls ill in the folds of the "mining mafia".¹⁴⁸⁰ The RTI movement has lost a big activist with the death of Amit Jethwa, one who unidentified assailants killed. Whistleblower protection has come under scanner after Satyendra Dubey was killed in Gaya, Bihar, in 2003. Satyendra Dubey was the project director at the National Highways Authority of India. The killing of Manjunath Shanmugam, the sales manager at Indian Oil Corporation, for exposing the petrol adulteration mafia, resulted in the country underlining the current necessity of laws protecting whistleblowers.¹⁴⁸¹

Despite all efforts, we are back to the same situation today as we were some decades ago. Those sacrifices the revolutionaries were offering seem futile, and the post-independence period in India was supposed to be significant beyond mere independence itself. Have we ever considered the suffering that these revolutionaries have borne to be in vain? Can oppression or failure really break us? That is the question we are presented with today. Those advocating for the RTI should campaign

¹⁴⁷⁸ "Central Board of Sec. Education v. Aditya Bandopadhyay, (2011) 8 SCC 497."

¹⁴⁷⁹ *supra* note 9.

¹⁴⁸⁰ "Fifteen Years of Right to Information Act in India: A Long Way To Go. Available at: <https://revistaselectronicas.ujaen.es/index.php/TAHRJ/article/download/6537/6205/35736?inline=1#ref-21-6537> (Accessed: 29 September 2024)."

¹⁴⁸¹ "Kamla, *Role of RTI Act in making Governance accountable & Transparent*, 73, THE INDIAN JOURNAL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, 321-330 (2012)."

and mobilize for consolidation and full strengthening of this right. Country and government, after all, are ours; so are our functions to preserve integrity in our systems and assert our rights. Plenty of discomforts are carried by those stuck in the old work culture, traditional thoughts, administrative apathy, and bureaucratic attitudes. This is the reason behind the 40 percent failure among the applicants as they do not get any information within the 30-day period that has been required. Even when such information has been obtained, only 30 percent would be accurate, complete, or truthful.

There is no mechanism within the RTI framework to trace back whether an applicant was served with the information sought by him/her. In like manner, there is no accountability from the Departments concerned. The RTI Cell performs its moral and legal duty of providing copies of replies, but it is deplorably understaffed. Though the number of applicants going to RTI offices has increased, the administration seems completely unconcerned with the acute need to provide it with more staff. Such officers are neither adequately manned nor equipped. Most of them have not been trained up to date about matters related to RTI and in some places, even the cell of RTI has not been provided with a room. The incentive levels are extremely low, and most employees do not accept this RTI position; if some willing employees accept it, they face many obstacles. Most departments do not have a Coordinator in the RTI cell so that applicants can get correct information within the stipulated 30 days. There is no strict law implementation of the government within the Information Commission. Information is available for small issues, but policy issues and big schemes, especially those that have links with corruption, mostly receive silence from those officials.

The spread of awareness about the RTI Law largely depends upon nongovernment organizations, activists as there is almost no interest of the government in propagating this

law. For example, during 2008-09, the government expended Rs 109 crore for print media and Rs 100 crore for electronic media advertisement, but a single paisa for promoting the Act was not allotted. Will the administration or government stay inactive forever?

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is essential to establish a robust legal and administrative framework that facilitates the free flow of information to prevent the undue victimization and harassment of individuals seeking information. The Supreme Court, along with three reports from the Law Commission, have emphasized the need for a strong witness protection mechanism in India. As late as on 10 March 2015, the Bombay High Court asked the Maharashtra Government to conclude within 6 months the law on witness protection, which would include whistleblowers and activists. Recently, media reports have also brought an affidavit submitted by the Central Vigilance Commission before the Supreme Court of India, revealing that it had dealt with only 1,063 of 3,634 complaints filed before it between 2007 and 2014, while 244 complaints relating to victimization and intimidation by the respondent agencies were dismissed.
2. Anonymous requests should be allowed as that would encourage even the innocent ones who are within the system to participate in cleaning up that system.
3. Tardy information is denied information. Satisfying the bids made for information by information requestants is often lost in red tape, and the purpose of delivery of the information is consequently defeated long after the desired information is either missing, incomplete, or misleading. Pending applications are too many. The quantum of cases to be filled by new

tribunals should have sufficient manpower.¹⁴⁸²

4. Withheld information is a denial of information. In most cases, information seekers get entangled in red tape, and there is a delay on various grounds in the provision of information, which defeats the very purpose of the Act. Even after long waiting periods, the sought information is missing, incomplete, or misleading. Applications backlog is huge, and more tribunals must be set up with sufficient staff to handle the onslaught.
5. The Act could be introduced as an obligatory chapter in school and college curricula. It will enable citizens in the long term about their rights, the importance, and benefits of the Act. It is quite unrealistic to expect anything short of superficial changes.
6. The Act does not cover all institutions, and all political parties are completely outside its ambit. Encompassing political parties under the Act's fold would no doubt bring more transparency at the grassroots levels. At a time when divisive politics has become the hallmark of Indian politics, the disinclination to follow the Act has emerged as one of those few issues on which national parties cutting across their ideologies have some convergence of opinions. Where political parties have continued to insist that they are outside the ambit of the transparency law, a June 2013 ruling by the Central Information Commission declared them to be public authorities subject to the Act.¹⁴⁸³

CONCLUSION

The Right to Information Act, 2005 has turned out to be an effective tool for democratizing governance and holding India's governments accountable. The legislation, which gives the

citizenry access to information, has helped to achieve a more open, responsive, and accountable administration. For instance, the legislation will empower the public to analyze government decisions, verify use of resources, and participate in democratic processes. The RTI Act works as a shield against corruption and malpractices, which prevents governmental agencies from hiding information that might bring out administrative irregularities. But when it comes to the implementation of the Act, there have certainly been several bruises. In many Government departments, there are poorly kept records and less manpower, which hampers the reply over RTI applications. For example, a lack of any vigorous training and incentives for PIOs also acts as a negative factor in disseminating information effectively.

It also reveals the apparent hostility and threats meted out to RTI activists, harassment faced, and even violence against several of them. The tragic cases of Amit Jethwa, Satyendra Dubey, and Manjunath Shanmugam do foreground the need for robust whistleblower protection and measures to protect those people who seek to uphold the principles of the Act. Another critical area is that commissions should be properly resourced and be autonomous so that the entire structure of the RTI framework remains effective. It is imperative that the government and civil society come together to cross these hurdles for the RTI Act to reach its full potential. These would establish a sound basis for the long-term momentum of the RTI movement by more awareness campaigns, better institutional backup, and legislation kept in harmony to safeguard the whistling of the whistleblowers and activists. As a developing tool of the people's empowerment, the RTI Act, essentially would be a symbol of democratic governance, which would inculcate transparency, liability, and citizen participation while administering matters in India. Its sustainability in the future would depend solely on the interest of the stakeholders in keeping it intact and that right to information to be usable, relevant, and effective for each citizen.

¹⁴⁸² "Sending whistle-blowers to their deaths (2015) *Economic and Political Weekly*. Available at: <https://www.epw.in/journal/2015/12/editorials/sending-whistle-blowers-their-deaths.html> (Accessed: 28 September 2024)."

¹⁴⁸³ "Jebbaraj, P. (2019) *Political parties yet to comply with RTI act*, *The Hindu*. Available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/political-parties-yet-to-comply-with-rti-act/article26601174.ece> (Accessed: 29 September 2024)."